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"YOU WILL BE A WOOD-CARVER SOME TIME"

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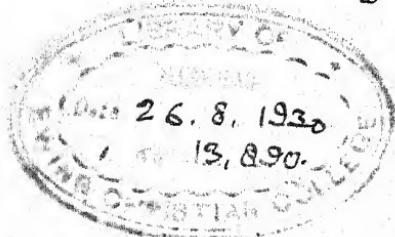
SWISS STORIES

FROM
MADAME JOHANNA SPYRI

AND TWO STORIES FROM
MADAME KABALINSKY

For Children and Those who Love Children

Illustrated by Norman Sutcliffe



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TONI

CHAPTER I

In the Stone Cottage

High up in the Bernese Alps, above the little village of Kandergrund, stands a lonely cottage overshadowed by an old fir tree. (Not far from the house rushes a wild mountain torrent sweeping down masses of rock and stones from the cliffs above to form its bed.) For this reason the little dwelling is called the stone cottage.

Here lived an honest day labourer, Toni, who was known throughout the region for his industry and faithfulness.

He had a young wife, and a little boy who was the joy of his heart, and there was no pleasure in the world for him like that of spending a quiet Sunday at home with his child after a week's work. So five years passed in undis-

turbed peace. They had no luxuries and few earthly possessions, yet the pair were contented and happy. Toni earned enough to keep them from want, and they desired no more; for they loved each other and their little Toni.

The child had already learned to make himself useful about the house—to take care of the goat, and to work in the little garden behind the cottage.

He tripped merrily after his mother from morning till night as happy as the birds in the old fir tree. On Saturday his mother scoured and cleaned everything with greater zeal; for the father came home early that day, and they went to meet him. This was a great pleasure to Toni. When he saw the preparations for starting, he would jump for joy and call again and again: "Now we are going to meet Father! Now we are going to meet Father!"

It was the beautiful month of May, and another Saturday evening had come. The birds were singing outside in the old tree, and inside Elsbeth was scouring briskly that she might soon be able to go out, while Toni danced about, now outside, now inside, shouting: "Now we are going to meet Father!"

At last the work was done. The mother put on her shawl and a clean apron, and left the cottage. The child tripped along at her side.

They walked toward the torrent, crossed the wooden bridge, and then began to climb the narrow path which leads through blooming meadows to the Mattenhof, where Toni was at work.

The last rays of the setting sun fell over the meadows, and far below in Kandergrund sounded the evening bell.

The woman stood still and folded her hands. "Fold your hands, Toni," she said; "it is the vesper bell." The child obeyed. "What shall I say?" he asked.

"Give to us and all weary ones a blessed Sunday. Amen," said the woman devoutly.

Toneli repeated the words. Suddenly he cried: "Father is coming!" A man came rushing down the mountain at full speed.

"That is not Father," said the mother, and they both ran towards the man, who stopped when he saw them, and said, panting: "Do not go any farther—turn back—I was just coming to tell you—something has happened."

"Ah, me!" said Elsbeth in great anxiety; "is it anything about Toni?"

"Yes, he has been struck by a falling tree. They brought him in—and he is now at the Mattenhof; but don't go up there," he cried, holding Elsbeth, who tried to hurry past him as soon as she heard the news.

"Not go?" she said quickly. "I must go to him and take care of him and see that they bring him home."

"You can do nothing — he is — he is — already dead," said the messenger in a broken voice.

Then he turned and ran back as if glad to be rid of his message. Elsbeth sank down helplessly on a rock by the way. She covered her face and wept so violently that little Toni was greatly alarmed and began to weep too. He pressed close to her, but she did not notice him until it grew dark. Then she took him up and said: "Come, Toneli! we must go home; it is late."

But he resisted. "No, no! we must wait for Father."

The poor woman wept again: "Ah, Toneli! Father is not coming. He is already keeping the blessed Sunday which we asked for the weary. The good God has taken him to Heaven, where everything is so beautiful that he never could wish to come away."

"Then we will go there, too," said Toneli, starting at once.

"Yes, yes, we are going there," said his mother; "but we must go home first," and silently they went back to the quiet cottage.

The next day the farmer sent word to

Elsbeth that he would make all necessary arrangements for the burial, and it would be better for her not to come until the funeral.

Elsbeth followed his advice, and waited in her desolate home until the bell tolling in Kandergrund summoned her to follow her husband to his last home.

Then came sad and bitter days for the poor woman. It sometimes seemed as if they must starve.

They had nothing but the goat, and the patch of potatoes behind the house.

Elsbeth had one comfort—she could pray, and although often with tears, yet in the firm belief that God heard her. At night, when she put little Toni in bed, she would kneel down and repeat, as never before, the old prayer:

“Oh, God above! Oh, Father-heart!
My trust throughout the years!
Why dost Thou leave me to my grief,
And send me bitter tears?

“Ch, God, how long, how long dost Thou
Thy servant here forget?
How long must I in grief sit down,
My bread with tears be wet?

“For Thee, oh, God, my heart doth long
Amid this earthly pain!
In Thee alone my heart doth trust—
Let me not hope in vain!

Toni

" Grant to Thy servant grace to bear
Whate'er Thy love may send,
Until in heaven these cries are heard,
And tears in blessing end."

The poor woman's tears would flow as she prayed, and Toni, with folded hands, wept softly with her.

So time passed away, and Elsbeth struggled on.

Toni was now seven years old, and began to be useful to her. When she worked in the garden, he would pull up the weeds, and pick up the stones, and when the goat was let out of the shed, he would follow it, step by step, to see that it did not stray off. When his mother was spinning, he would sit beside her, and weave his winter shoes out of strips of stout cloth as she had taught him to do.

But his greatest joy was to sit with her on Sundays on the little bench outside the door, and hear about his father.

But the time came when Toni must go to school and be separated from his mother.

He was not accustomed to other children and their ways, and it seemed very strange to him to hear a great shout when the boys were let out of school, and to see them running and pushing each other, and wrestling until their caps were knocked off and their frocks torn.

Sometimes they asked him to join them, and, when he ran away, they would shout, "You are a coward". But he did not care for that; he only ran the faster to be at home with his mother.

Yet the school furnished him with a new interest. He saw pictures of animals which the older pupils had to draw. He tried to do the same, and at home he drew the animals again and again, as long as he had a scrap of paper. Then he cut them out and tried to stand them up; but that did not succeed.

Suddenly the thought came to him that if they were made of wood they would certainly stand.

He took a bit of wood and cut with his knife until he had a body and four legs; but the wood was not large enough for the neck and head, so he had to take another piece and calculate how large it could be and where the head would come.

He worked patiently until he had something which looked like a goat. His mother was much pleased at his skill, and said: "You will certainly be a wood-carver some time, and a very good one."

From that time Toni looked carefully at every bit of wood which he saw, and when he found a piece good for carving he picked it up;

so that he often came home with his pockets full of pieces of wood, which he carefully treasured to work on in his spare minutes.

Several years passed. Toni still clung to his mother with the same affection. He was never so happy as when he sat at his carving with his mother near at her spinning-wheel.

He was now twelve years old and had left school.

The time had come when he must begin to earn something. His mother wished to ask the farmer at Mattenhof whether he had any light work for him; but whenever she spoke of it Toni would say: "Oh, Mother, don't do it; let me be a wood-carver."

One Saturday evening as they sat at their supper, she said: "Toni, we must do something. I think it will be best for me to go to the Mattenhof to-morrow."

"Oh, Mother, don't," begged Toni. "Only let me be a wood-carver. I will be so industrious that you will not have to work so hard, and, besides, I can stay at home with you."

"Ah, Toni, what would I not give to keep you always at home with me? But that cannot be. And, even if you could learn wood-carving, how could we sell the things? I should like to talk with someone who could advise me."

"Don't you know anyone whom you could ask?" said Toni anxiously, trying to think where someone could be found. His mother was thinking too.

"I will go to the minister," she said; "he will advise me." Toni was overjoyed at this idea, and it was decided that they should go to church the next morning and see him. Elsbeth took some specimens of Toni's work to show as proofs of his skill. She told the minister how he worked early and late at his carving, and wished to do nothing else; but they did not know any way for him to learn this trade, nor how the work could be disposed of afterwards. The minister listened very kindly, and then showed her that if Toni should only be able to cut out little animals and boxes, he could not earn very much and would only waste his time; but he must learn thoroughly with a good carver. He said that there was in the village of Frutigen a very skilful, well-known wood-carver, whose work went all over the world, even to America. He could cut whole groups of animals on high cliffs, chamois and eagles, and whole mountains with the cattle and herdsman.

He advised Elsbeth to speak with this man. If Toni should learn with him, he would have every opportunity for disposing of his work.

Elsbeth left with a new hope in her heart. Toni was waiting for her before the house in great suspense.

She had to tell him at once what the minister had said, and when she spoke of the workman in Frutigen, Toni stood suddenly still and said: "Come, Mother, we will go there now."

His mother made some objections; but Toni pleaded so hard that she said finally: "We must go home first, and eat something, for it is a long distance; but we can do that quickly and then set out at once."

So they hastened to the cottage for a little bread and milk, and then started out again.

It was a journey of several hours; but Toni was so busy with his plans and thoughts for the future that time passed like a dream, and he looked up in astonishment when his mother said: "See, there is the church-tower of Frutigen!"

They soon stood at the wood-carver's door and learned that he was at home. He sat at a table with his wife looking at some beautifully painted pictures of animals which he could use in his work. He bade them welcome, and asked them to sit down on the wooden bench which went all around the room against the wall.

Elsbeth accepted the invitation and began at

once to explain her errand; but Toni stood as if rooted to the floor, with his eyes fixed on some object. It was a glass case in which were two great rocks carved in wood. On one stood a chamois with her young, whose pretty, slender legs and fine head and neck were so natural that it seemed as if she must be alive and not of wood. On the other rock stood a hunter; his gun hung at his side, and he had a hat with a feather on his head, so beautifully carved that it seemed like a real hat and real little feather. Near the hunter stood a dog, which looked as if it were wagging its tail. Toni was enchanted; he did not stir, and hardly breathed.

When his mother had finished her story, the carver said that she seemed to think the matter much easier than it was; that it would take much time and trouble to learn to do good work. Yet he was willing to take the boy, as he seemed to have a taste for carving; but he must board in Frutigen for a couple of months and pay for his teaching besides, and she must judge whether she could afford to spend so much. He would promise for his part that the boy should be well taught.

Elsbeth could hardly speak from disappointment. She saw now that it was an utter impossibility to grant her child's dearest wish.

It was entirely out of the question that she could get the money.

She arose and thanked the man for his kindness; but said she must give up the idea. Then she motioned to Toni; but he was too deeply absorbed to notice. She took his hand and drew him gently out of the house.

When they were outside, Toni said, with a deep breath: "Did you look in the case, Mother? Did you see it?"

"Yes, yes, I saw it," said his mother, sighing; "but have you heard what the man said?"

"No, I heard nothing. When can I go?" he asked longingly.

"Ah, Toni, don't take it too much to heart, but it is impossible! I would do it if I could; but I cannot. The cost would be more than a whole year's rent, and you know how hard I work to get that."

It was a hard blow for Toni; the only hope of several years lay shattered before him; but he knew how hard his mother worked to give him what pleasure she could. He said nothing, but swallowed his rising tears, grieving the more because he had seen for the first time what wonderful things could be made of wood.

CHAPTER II

Up in the Mountains

The next morning the farmer sent word to Elsbeth that he wished to talk with her, and asked her to come to see him towards evening. When the time came, she put on a clean apron and said: "Finish your hoeing, Toni; then you can milk the goat and give it some clean straw for its bed; by that time I shall be at home."

She went up to the Mattenhof. The farmer stood in the barn-door looking with great satisfaction at the long line of cows going to the drinking-trough.

"I am glad to see you," he said to Elsbeth, holding out his hand. "I have been thinking about your boy, who is now old enough to begin some light work and help you a little—at least, to support himself."

"I have already thought of that," replied Elsbeth, "and wished to ask you whether you would not employ him about the farm."

"Very good," said the farmer; "I have a place for him with very little labour—almost none. It is to go to the little alp with the cows; the herdsman is on the great mountain with his boys, and sends a servant over morn-

ing and evening to milk; so the boy is not quite alone, and has nothing to do but to watch the cows and see that they do not stray away, or hook each other, or get into any trouble. He is master of the whole mountain, and has as much milk as he wishes; a king could not fare better."

Elsbeth was a little alarmed at this proposal. If Toni had only been about more with the servants and the cattle, and had a different sort of nature, rougher and more inclined to moving about! But he was so shy and quiet, and so ignorant of the business, it seemed very hard to send him away for the first time quite alone for several months to tend a herd of cows on the mountain. He was not very strong, and what would he do if anything should attack him or the cows! She told her fears to the farmer. But he thought it would be good for the boy to go away; he would grow stronger on the mountain, and nothing could happen to him. He could have a horn, and blow if anything was wrong, and in half an hour a servant would be there from the other mountain.

It was finally decided that Toni should go the next week when the cows were driven up.

"He shall have a nice sum of money, and a new suit of clothes when he comes down," said the farmer finally; "that will be useful to you during the winter."

Elsbeth thanked him, and took her departure.

At first Toni objected when he heard that he must be away for so long a time without once coming home; but his mother told him how easy the work was, and that he would grow stronger, and would then get better work, and the farmer would pay him well. So Toni objected no longer; but said he would like to earn something to help his mother. Then Elsbeth thought that she could go into one of the great hotels in Interlaken, where so many travellers come in the summer, and earn enough money to keep them through the winter without anxiety. She had served in Interlaken before her marriage, so she was already known there.

The day came when the great herd of cows must be driven up the mountain. Toni's mother gave him his little bundle of clothing and said: "Go in God's name. Do not forget to pray night and morning, and the good God will not forget you, and will protect you better than any man can do."

So Toni set out behind the herd of cattle for the little alp. Soon after, Elsbeth closed her cottage, drove the goat to Mattenhof, where the farmer had promised to take care of it, and then went to Interlaken.

When the great herd of cattle had proceeded some distance up the mountain, the herdsman turned with the greater part towards the left, and Toni and the cowboy went towards the right with the young cattle, for they could not keep many cows on the little alp, as all the milk had to be carried over to the herdsman's cottage on the other mountain.

They reached the top of the mountain, where stood a little hut. Nothing but grass was to be seen—not a tree nor a bush. A little bench was nailed to the wall of the hut, and a table stood before it; on the other side was a bed of hay, and in the corner a small stool, on which stood a wooden bowl. Toni and the cowboy went in. The latter put down the great wooden milk-pail which he had on his back, took out a loaf of bread and an immense piece of cheese, and said "You have a knife?" Toni nodded. Then the boy took the pitcher, swung the pail on his back, and went out. Toni followed. The herdsboy seated himself on a stool which he had brought out of the hut, and began to milk one cow after another. If one was too far away, he called, "Drive her here", and Toni obeyed. When the bucket was filled, it was emptied into the great pail, and so on until all the cows were milked. At last the boy filled the

bowl, gave it to Toni, took the great pail on his back, the bucket in his hand, and said "Good night". Then he went down the mountain, leaving Toni quite alone.

He put his bowl of milk in the hut, and then came out to look around him.

Opposite him was the great mountain with the herdsman's hut, and between them was a wide valley.

Both summits were enclosed by great frowning mountain-peaks, some rocky, grey, and fissured, others covered with snow, all looking towards heaven with so many points and peaks and ridges that it seemed to Toni as if they were enormous giants looking down at him, each one with its own face.

It was a clear evening. The opposite mountain glowed with a golden light. And now a star appeared above the dark heights and looked so kindly at Toni that it did him good. He thought of his mother, and how they used to stand before the little cottage and talk together at this hour, and all at once the feeling of loneliness overcame him, so that he ran into the hut, threw himself on his bed, burying his face in the hay, and wept until weariness overpowered him and he fell asleep.

A bright morning called him out early. The herdsman was already there. He milked the

cows in silence and went away. A long, long day followed. It was perfectly still; the cows were grazing or resting in the sunny field. Toni went into the hut several times to get a drink of milk and a bit of bread, and then came out and sat on the ground whittling the pieces of wood which he had in his pocket; for, although he had given up all hope of being a wood-carver, yet he could not help cutting out whatever he was able. Evening came at last. The man came and went silently, and poor, lonely Toni had nothing to say to him.

So one day passed like another; they were all so long! so long! When it grew dark at night, Toni always felt uneasy; the high mountains looked black and threatening as if they had evil purposes towards him. Then he would run into the hut and hide in the hay of his bed. Many days had gone by with the sun shining in a cloudless sky and the friendly star at night gleaming over the dark mountains. But, one afternoon, thick grey clouds spread over the sky, blinding flashes of lightning came and went, and fearful peals of thunder crashed through the air, echoed and re-echoed by the mountains, and a terrible storm burst forth.

It was as dark as night; the rain dashed against the walls of the little hut, the thunder rolled through the mountains with fearful

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reverberations, and vivid flashes lighted up the giant forms, which seemed to come nearer like spectres, and to look down more threateningly.

The cows ran about wildly and great birds of prey flew about with piercing cries.

Toni fled to his hut; but even there the lightning flashed out in fearful forms, and it seemed as if the thunder would dash the frail shelter to the ground. He could hardly breathe for fright. He climbed on the table, and expected every moment that the walls would fall and crush him.

The storm lasted for hours, so that the herdsman could not come over, and when night came it was still raging around the hut. In his terror, Toni stood half the night on the table; he had no longer power to think, he only had the feeling of a fearful power which would destroy everything. He did not know how he got to his bed; but he was lying there in the morning so weak that he could hardly raise himself.

Anxiously he looked out of the window. How would it be after such a night? The ground was wet, but the cows were feeding quietly. The sky was grey, and thick black clouds overspread it. Dark and terrible stood the high mountains. Many stormy days followed. The sun shone only for short intervals,

and new storms came so continuously that the herdsman said he had not seen such a summer for many years, and hoped never to have another, for he could not make half as much butter as he did the previous year—the cows would not give milk. During this time the herd chose the best moments to go over to the little mountain, milk the cows, and return as soon as possible; he had no time to look after the boy.

He often saw him sitting on his hay bed, and would call to him, "You are a lazy one!" But he troubled himself no further about the matter.

So June and a large part of July passed. The storms were less frequent; but thick mists shrouded the mountain, so that one could hardly see a step before him, and here and there a black head seemed to peer out above the mist.

The cattle often strayed away so far that the herd found them in the valley between the mountains and brought them up. That could not go on. He called to the boy, but received no answer. He ran into the hut. Toni sat on his bed in the corner, and stared vacantly before him.

"Why don't you look after the cows?" asked the man.

No answer. "Can't you speak? What is the matter with you?" No answer.

The man looked to see if he had eaten all his bread and cheese and was hungry perhaps. But there was more than half a loaf and the largest part of the cheese; Toni had only drunk the milk. "What do you want? Are you sick?" asked the man again.

Toni gave no answer; he seemed to hear nothing, and looked so fixedly before him that the man grew uneasy.

He went back and told the herdsman how the boy was, and they decided that when one of the herdsman's boys went down with the butter he must tell their master.

Another week passed, and the news was brought to the farmer. He thought the boy was only frightened by the storms and would soon be right again; yet he sent word to the herdsman to go over and see if it was necessary to bring him down from the mountain.

Some days later, the herdsman went over and found Toni still sitting in the corner. He neither moved nor spoke in answer to the man's questions.

"He must go down," said the man to his boy; "go with him, and be very kind to him. It is pitiful to see him."

The boy—a stout, hardy fellow of sixteen—went towards Toni and told him to stand up; but he did not stir. Then the boy took him up

like a feather, put him on his back, and so went down the mountain with his light burden. The farmer was alarmed when he saw Toni's sad condition. He did not know what to do with him. His mother was far away; he had no relatives near, and to keep him as he was would be too great a responsibility.

Suddenly a good thought came to him, one which always comes to the people in that region in every trouble and grief. "Take him to the minister," he said to the boy; "he will know what to do."

The minister tried every means to make Toni speak, asked him if he wished to go to his mother; but all in vain. Toni did not give the least sign of understanding. The good pastor sat down, wrote a letter, and said to the boy: "Go back to the Mattenhof and tell the farmer to send me his cart, and I will see that the child is taken to Berne. He is very ill; tell your master that."

The farmer was glad to have no other responsibility than that of sending him to the railway station, and the clergyman gave him into the charge of his sexton, a kind-hearted man, who was to take him to the great hospital in Berne with a letter to the physician there.

Toni was lifted to a seat in the open wagon, and for the first time in his life drove out into

the world. But he did not notice anything; it was as if the outer world existed no longer for him.

CHAPTER III

In the Hospital

The physician was spending a cheerful evening with his family. Even the lady from Geneva, who spent some hours every day with the family, seemed to have caught something of the general cheerfulness.

She had lost a much loved, highly gifted son some time before, and her grief had so affected her health that she had come to the hospital for treatment.

The lively conversation was interrupted by the arrival of a letter for the Doctor.

"A letter from a friend who sends a patient to the institution, a boy not as old as our Max.—Read it"—and he handed the letter to his wife.

"The poor boy!" she said; "is he here? Bring him in; perhaps it will do him good to see the children."

"I think he is here," said the Doctor, who went out, and soon returned with Toni and the

Toni

sexton. While he was conversing softly with the latter, his wife approached Toni, who had crept into the nearest corner. She spoke kindly to him, and asked him to come to the table with her children and eat something. Toni did not stir. Little Marie jumped down from her seat and came to him with a large piece of bread and butter. "Bite," she said encouragingly. Toni remained motionless.

"See! do so," and the child lit out a large piece, and held it out again, still nearer. But Toni looked blank and made no movement, and Marie turned away.

The Doctor now came, and, taking Toni's hand, led him out of the room. The appearance of poor Toni had made a great impression on the children, and quite subdued them.

Later, when they had gone to bed, and the two women sat together, the Doctor came in and told them what he had learned from the sexton in regard to Toni's illness and his life with his mother before. He said it was no wonder he had come to this state when one knew how terrible the storms in the mountains are, and that a delicate child left alone there for weeks and months without hearing a human voice might well become utterly stupefied.

Here the lady from Geneva, who took a quite unusual interest in the fate of poor Toni, broke

out in great excitement: "How can a mother leave a child in such a place as that? It is hard to understand."

"You cannot dream," said the Doctor, quietly, "what poor mothers are compelled to let their children do, and it hurts them as much as others. You see how much goes on that we know nothing about, and how hard poverty can press."

"Is there any help for the poor boy?" asked the Doctor's wife.

"If I only could find some means of moving him!" he replied. "He is so perfectly impassive and lifeless!"

"Oh, help him! help him!" begged the sick woman, earnestly. "Oh, if I could only do something for him!"

And in great excitement she began to walk up and down the room, trying to think of some means of help, for Toni's story touched her heart.

It was the second week of August when Toni came to the hospital. Day after day, week after week passed, and the Doctor brought every morning the same tidings: there was not the least change to be noticed.

Every way was tried to enliven him, to make him laugh, and every way to move him, to make him weep; they tried all arts to arouse

his attention; all, all in vain—no sign of interest or movement could be awakened.

"If he could only be made to laugh or cry!" repeated the Doctor again and again. But after four weeks every means seemed exhausted. "I will try one thing more," said the Doctor to his wife. "I have written to my friend, the clergyman, to ask whether he was very fond of his mother; if so, she must be sent here. Perhaps the sight of her will make an impression on him."

The last guests had left the hotel in Interlaken, where Elsbeth was working, by the first week of September, and she started at once for home, hoping to get everything in order before Toni came down from the mountains, never dreaming that he was not there, nor suspecting all that had happened. As soon as she reached home, she went to the Mattenhof to inquire for Toni and get her goat. The farmer was very kind, and said her goat was one of the handsomest in the region, it had had such good feed; but when Elsbeth asked for Toni, he turned away, and said he was busy and that she must go to the minister, who knew best about the boy.

It seemed a little strange to Elsbeth that the minister should know best what was going on upon the mountain, and her anxiety grew greater the more she thought of it.

She tied the goat when she reached the stone cottage, and then hastened down to Kandergrund.

With great kindness the minister told her that Toni had not borne the mountain-life very well, and they had brought him down and sent him to Berne to be under the care of a good physician.

Elsbeth was greatly alarmed and wished to go to her child at once. The minister thought it would not be best, however, until the physician gave his permission.

With a heavy heart the poor mother went home; but in a few days she received a message from the Doctor that she was to go to Berne at once. She started early the next morning, and at noon she stood at the door of the hospital. The Doctor's wife and the lady from Geneva received her in the most cordial and friendly manner. The latter had so interested herself in the fate of Toni and his mother that she hardly thought of anything else than how to help them. She knew how to enter into the mother's feelings for her only child, and had begged the Doctor to let her be present when he brought the boy to his mother, that she might see the joy of the poor child. After warning Elsbeth that she must not expect Toni to speak to her at first, the Doctor

led him into the room. His mother ran towards him and tried to take his hand; but he drew it back, and crept into the corner, staring vacantly.

Elsbeth went to him and caressed him. "Toneli, Toneli!" she said again and again, tenderly. "Don't you know me? Don't you know your mother?"

But Toni only leaned against the wall and gave no sign of recognition.

The tender tones of the mother grew mournful. "Oh, Toni, only say one word! Just look at me! Toneli, don't you hear me?"

Toni remained motionless, and his stony eyes met the mother's glance, full of tenderness. It was too much for poor Elsbeth that the only blessing she possessed on earth, her Toni, should be taken from her, and in such a cruel way! She forgot everything about her; she fell on her knees beside the child, and in the grief of her heart poured out the prayer:

"Oh, God above! Oh, Father-heart!
My trust throughout the years!
Why dost Thou leave me to my grief,
And send me bitter tears?"

"Oh, God, how long, how long dost Thou
Thy servant here forget?
How long must I in grief sit down,
My bread with tears be wet?"

A new expression came into Toni's eyes; he looked at his mother. She did not notice it, but continued:

"For Thee, oh, God, my heart doth long
Amid this earthly pain!
In Thee alone my heart doth trust—
Let me not hope in vain!"

Toni suddenly threw himself upon his mother and sobbed aloud. She put her arms around him, and her tears of grief became tears of joy.

"It is done!" said the Doctor, joyfully, motioning to Elsbeth to go into the next room, where they two could be alone.

After a little, Toni began to talk quite naturally with his mother, and asked: "Are we to go home, Mother, to the stone cottage? Must I not go again to the mountain?"

She told him that she would take him home at once, and they would stay there together.

Soon all Toni's thoughts came back to him, and he said: "But I must earn something, Mother."

"Don't trouble yourself about that," replied Elsbeth; "the good God will show a way when it is time."

Then she began to tell him about the goat,

and he grew quite merry. When the Doctor came to them, the boy had entirely altered, and his eyes were a serious but an intelligent look. The lady from Geneva was unspeakably glad; she sat down by him, and asked him many questions about himself. The Doctor spoke to Elsbeth. "My good woman," he began, "those words which you repeated made a deep impression on the boy's heart. Did he know the hymn before?"

"Ah!" replied Elsbeth, "many hundred times have I prayed that prayer by his bed when he was a little thing, and he has wept with me when he did not know why."

"He wept because you wept; he suffered because you suffered," said the Doctor. "Now I understand why he was roused by those words. With such impressions in his childhood, it is no wonder that he has grown up quiet and retiring. That explains much that has passed."

The lady from Geneva now came to speak with Elsbeth. "He must not and shall not go to the mountain again," she said, earnestly. "He is not suited to that. We must find something else for him. Has he no special desire for any occupation? It must be something easy; he is not strong, and needs care."

"Oh, yes! he has a strong desire to learn one

thing, and has had ever since he was a little boy; but I hardly dare say what it is."

"Yes, yes! tell us what, it is," said the lady, encouragingly, expecting some impossible thing.

"He would like to be a wood-carver, and has much taste for it; but the board and apprentice money amount to over eighty francs."

"Is that all?" cried the lady, in great amazement. "Is that all? Come, my boy!" turning to Toni, "would you like to be a wood-carver better than anything?"

Toni's eyes, as he said yes, showed the lady how great his joy was, and she asked: "Would you like to learn at once?" Toni assented joyfully.

"Ought he to gain more strength first?" she asked, turning to the Doctor.

"Carving is not very heavy work," was the response, "and plenty of good food is the main thing for Toni. His mother has told me that there is an excellent master in Frutigen, and there is a very good inn there, if he could only now and then—"

"I will look out for that," interrupted the lady. "I will go with them; we will start tomorrow. I will engage board and lodging in Frutigen, all that he needs."

In her joy she shook hands with Toni and

his mother again and again, and went to tell her maid to make preparations for the journey.

"We have two convalescents," said the Doctor to his wife, when they were alone. "Our lady is cured too. A new interest has come into her life, and she will be a new creature. This is a good day!"

The next day the happy little party arrived in Frutigen. The lady found out from the carver what would be necessary for a complete outfit for Toni, and, after charging him to teach him everything that could be useful in the future, they went to the inn. Here she made all arrangements with the landlord for Toni's comfort, and then they dined together.

During the meal she told them that she was going home to Geneva, where there were great shops for the sale of wood-carvings, and she would arrange for Toni to send all his work there, so that he could begin with all courage.

She also insisted that Toni should stay three months in Frutigen and learn the business thoroughly. He could visit his mother on Sundays, or she could come to him.

Elsbeth and Toni could find no words to express their gratitude; but their benefactress understood, and went away with a lighter heart than she had known for a long time.

She wished to return to Geneva at once in

order to carry out her plans, and the Doctor gladly consented.

Toni entered upon his work with such zeal and skill that by the fourth week the carver said to his wife: "If he continues in this way, he will do better than I do myself."

The three months came to an end, and it was Christmas time. One snowy morning Toni went home. He looked round and rosy, and his heart was so glad that he sang for joy. But when he came in sight of the stone cottage, with the snow-covered fir tree behind it, tears came into his eyes: he had come home—and to stay there. His mother ran to meet him, and which of the two was happier nobody could tell. Their highest wish was gratified; Toni was a wood-carver, and could carry on his work at home. What blessings God had poured upon them! So many gifts had come to Elsbeth from Geneva that she had no more anxiety, and two days later such a Christmas was kept as had never been dreamed of.

There was clothing for Toni, and all kinds of knives for his carving, and a book with pictures, so large and beautiful that his master's was a mere plaything beside it. And Elsbeth was lovingly remembered too. The lady in Geneva had thought of everything, and the reflected joy shone into her own heart.

Toni

Toni has carved the most beautiful chamois and hunters and the most splendid eagles in the shop-windows of Geneva. And whenever he succeeds especially well with any piece, it does not go to the tradesmen of Geneva, but to the lady towards whom he will ever have a thankful heart.

IN SAFE KEEPING

CHAPTER I

Before the Journey

In the town of Basle near the rushing river Rhine, is a large stone house. Here, one sunny morning in July, sat Mr. Feland, with his face almost hidden behind a great newspaper. His wife sat opposite him, making the coffee, for it was nearly breakfast time. The door opened, and two little girls entered, followed by their governess. Little Rita ran through the room and sprang upon her papa's knee. She put her curly head under the great paper and called roguishly, "Oh, Papa, I have found you! When do we go to the Gemmi?"

"Good morning first, little grasshopper, and then plans for travelling," said her father, laying down his paper.

Rita threw her arms around his neck, and

said "Good morning" most tenderly, while her sister Ella stood waiting for her morning greeting before she took her place at the table.

"Suppose you go to your place too," said Papa to Rita, who made no motion towards leaving her high seat.

"I am going, Papa," declared Rita, sitting up straight. "I only wished to wait until you said when we should go to the Gemmi."

"As soon as Mother has packed," was the reply.

Rita jumped down and ran to her mother.

"Oh, Mamma, let us pack to-day! Please, please, at once," begged Rita, coaxingly. "I will help you, and Ella can help too, and Miss Holweg, and then we can start early to-morrow, and then—"

"But we will sit down at the table and drink our milk now," responded her mother; and the child, seeing no prospect of an answer at once, took her place at the breakfast table.

This question of a journey to the Gemmi had for a long time been first every morning in the Feland household. Rita hardly thought of anything else.

Her father and mother had travelled in Switzerland the summer before and had been so pleased with the Gemmi Pass, which leads from Wallis to Berne, that they had determined to

return the next season with the children and spend some time there. They had commissioned their guide, Caspar, to rent a house for them somewhere, and he had proposed to let his own little one.

He was always away himself during the summer with parties or travellers—his two boys were tending a great herd of cows on the Alps, and his wife could live in the upper room and wait upon them. This proposition was accepted, and the house engaged for the summer months. This news and the description of the beautiful meadows and high snow-mountains, the green Alps and herds of cows, had made a deep impression on the children, and Rita could hardly wait for the day of their departure. All winter long she said repeatedly: "Mamma, will summer soon come?"

Now summer had really come, and her questions grew more urgent. Every morning an anxious voice said: "When shall we go to the Gemmi?"

At last came the day when the whole Feland house seemed like a great fair. Such heaps of clothing were lying about that there was no more room to put anything. Gradually everything disappeared in three enormous trunks, and two days later the whole family were seated in a travelling carriage. Rita sat next to her

father, whom she hugged every moment in her ecstasy; for now they were really going to the Gemmi!.

CHAPTER II

In the Gemmi Pass

Not far from the highest part of the Gemmi Pass a narrow path leads into the forest, and then to a precipice where the traveller looks down into a fearful chasm.

One fine summer evening a boy came along this wood-path. He held a large red flower in his hand, which he had found in the woods, and gazed at it admiringly from time to time. Now he came out into the open space and looked about, and, seeing nothing especial, he continued on his way in the narrow meadow-path which leads up to the green cliff. Here stood two little houses, not far apart, each with its little shed behind for the goats. The larger of these belonged to the guide Caspar, who did a very good business in the summer. He not only owned two goats, but a fine cow, which supplied him with good milk and butter. In the house above, with the old, shabby door and the

broken roof, lived Martin, a large man, who was called everywhere "Stout Martin".

He also had work in summer, especially when it was fine weather, and earned enough to support his wife and four children by carrying luggage for travellers through the pass. Caspar's two boys stood before the door of their house, and seemed to have a weighty matter under discussion. They looked at, felt, and compared with great earnestness two objects which they held in their hands, and when they had finished one comparison they began again. The little boy who had come out of the woods stood still and looked on in astonishment. "Seppli, come, look!" called one of the boys to him. Seppli drew nearer.

"See what Father brought us from the fair at Berne!" called the larger boy, and each held up his present.

What a wonderful sight it was to Seppli's eyes!

Cheppi and Yorg had each a long whip; the stout handles were wound with red leather; the long lashes were braided of solid leather strips and at the end were knots of yellow silk. Seppli was speechless; he had never seen anything so beautiful!

"Just listen," said Cheppi, and he began to swing his whip; Yorg did the same, and there

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was such a cracking and snapping through the valley that it seemed to Seppli that nothing could be finer in the world.

"If only I had a whip with a yellow snapper!" he sighed, when the noise ceased.

"Yes, but you can wait," said Cheppi, grandly, and with a parting crack he ran off to show his treasure elsewhere. Yorg ran after him; but Seppli did not stir. A heavy weight had fallen on his little heart. He had seen something which filled his mind with desire, and Cheppi had said lightly: "Yes, but you can wait." It seemed to Seppli as if he had lost everything in life which could give him any pleasure.

He grasped his red flower fiercely and threw it away; for to have only a red flower, and never, never a whip with a yellow snapper—that turned Seppli against the flower. It fell down in the grass, and Seppli looked at it in silent wrath. Nobody knows how long he would have stood there if the door of the house had not opened, and a woman appeared with a large broom in her hand.

"Where are the boys?" she asked, quickly.

"Gone with the whips," was the answer, for these treasures were still before his eyes.

"Run and call them, and be spry," said the woman. "We must go to the mountain early

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to-morrow, and the family comes in the evening, and there is much to be done. Run, Seppli, and tell them!"

The child ran with all his might in the direction where the boys had disappeared, and the woman began a vigorous sweeping. She was Caspar's wife and the mother of Cheppi and Yorg. A letter had come from Mr. Feland that morning announcing his arrival on the following evening, which was the reason of these preparations. The two boys now came running home, snapping their whips loudly, and Seppli came after them.

When the boys were set at work, he turned towards home, carrying a great grief with him.

His father stood before the house, cutting a great block of wood into small sticks for the hearth-fire.

Martheli, Friedli, and Beth were looking on, and Seppli joined them. His father said, gently: "Ah, Seppli! carry in some of the wood to your mother to cook the potatoes." Seppli did as he was told, and forgot his sorrow a little in the work. But later, when he lay down on his narrow bed, he could not go to sleep; the great grief rose up before his eyes, and he sighed: "Oh, if I only had a whip with a yellow snapper!"

CHAPTER III

Acquaintance is Made

The next morning, early, a fearful snapping of whips was heard, for Cheppi and Yorg were up at four o'clock, waiting for the cows which were to be driven up the mountain. The boys were going as cow-herds, to stay until autumn, and they were so glad that they could not make noise enough—for to do nothing the whole summer but run after the cows with their whips—that was a charming prospect! When their mother had given them their knapsacks, and charged them to do right, she went back into the house and began a scrubbing and scouring which lasted all day. The sun was setting behind the fir trees when she finished polishing the windows and looked at them all critically.

Everything was glistening—the windows all around—the table with its slate top—the seats around the wall, and the floor. She saw that a party of people were coming up from the valley, and, putting on a clean apron, she stationed herself in the door to receive the strangers. The horses stopped, and Mr. Feland helped down his wife and Miss Holweg, and

then the children. Rita ran about here and there, and could not decide which was the most beautiful, the wooden house with the little bench by the door—the green fields around with the flowers and the brook—or the sunset glow on the cliffs and fir trees; everything was so new, so beautiful! Ella also was full of wonder, and looked about in quiet admiration.

Rita had a new delight in the interior of the house; everything was so different from what she had seen before. She caught Ella by the hand and ran into every corner. "See," she cried, "there are seats all round the wall, and look where you go upstairs!"

She quickly mounted the steps which led to the sleeping-rooms. That was a grand discovery! A door opened into another room where there were two beds. There was a little room beyond, and a wooden stairway on the other side down to the sitting-room.

This would be a lovely circuit to make many times a day, and everything was so new and unusual and interesting! When she finally was in bed, and her mother had said good night, she drew a long breath, and said with inward satisfaction: "Now we are at the Gemmil!"

Beautiful summer days followed, with golden sunshine on the meadows, murmuring breezes in the fir-wood, and a deep blue sky above the cliffs and snow-covered mountains. Ella and Rita had soon discovered all the pretty places in the region. Ella delighted to lie on the soft moss by the fir trees, and listen while Miss Holweg read or told stories; but Rita was always full of plans. She wished to climb up to the fir trees on the cliff above them, to get a view, or to go deep, deep into the forest, where the great birds were, which made such loud cries. To-day she had a new proposition to make. "Oh, Papa, lay down your book a moment," she begged; "I want to tell you something. See, Papa!" she continued, as he prepared to listen, "a little boy has been standing before the house over there looking at us all yesterday and to-day. I must go over to him, and ask him why he does it and what his name is."

Papa assented, and Rita started at once. Seppli was still standing in the same place, looking over to the neighbour's house; for there was always something interesting to see since the arrival of the strangers.

Rita placed herself before him with her hands behind her, as her papa stood when he was discussing matters of importance.

"What do you wish to see that you are always looking over at us?" she asked.

"Nothing," answered Seppli.

This answer did not satisfy Rita.

"Did you think perhaps that we have a little boy, and wish to see what he looks like?" she demanded further.

"No," said Seppli, shortly.

"You have forgotten perhaps what you wished to see," said Rita, settling the matter for herself and Seppli. "What is your name?"

"Seppli."

"How old are you?"

"I don't know."

"You ought to know. Come, stand beside me, so—" and Rita placed herself near him and looked over her shoulder. He was a little shorter, but more firmly built.

"You are not so large as I am," she said, "you are quite small. I shall be seven years old on my birthday. I am six already—that I know very well, for I had so many presents. You are not yet six, perhaps, because you are so small."

Seppli received this information in good faith. He did not know he had been seven for some time.

"What do you do all day long?" asked Rita. Seppli had to think for a long time. Finally

he said: "I know where there are some red flowers."

These words fell like a glowing spark into Rita's heart. All at once she saw a bush of flaming red flowers somewhere in the woods, and her spirit longed for the wonderful blossoms.

"Where? where? where are the flowers, Seppli? Come, let us go there quickly," and Rita caught Seppli's hand and drew him away. "There," he said, and pointed up towards the woods. "Oh, do you get into the forest there?" cried Rita, drawing Seppli on with all her might.

"Yes, deeper and deeper," answered Seppli, without hastening his steps in the least, for he had heavy wooden shoes on his feet. But Rita kept pulling him. She already seemed to see the path through the forest and the red flowers gleaming and shining there.

"Come now, Seppli, come," she cried, pulling him more.

But they had reached Caspar's house, Papa stood in the door, looking for his little girl, whom he now saw drawing Seppli after her. "Hallo! not so fast!" he called; "come here! Where is this new friend to be dragged?"

"Oh, Papa!" called Rita, earnestly, "he knows where there are beautiful red flowers in the woods. Let us go and gather them."

"No, no," said Papa, taking Rita's hand.

"That will not do. We are going to walk now with Mamma, and if the little boy will find the flowers and bring them here, he shall have a piece of cake."

So Rita was taken into the house, and soon they all came out together and wandered down the sunny path towards the valley. Seppli watched them until they were out of sight, and then turned towards home.

CHAPTER IV

A Night of Terror

The next day, when Mrs. Feland was resting, Miss Holweg went out with her basket of knitting to the shady place near the house where they spent many a pleasant hour with their books and work. Rita was telling Ella about the bush in the woods with flaming red flowers which gleamed among the trees. Her eyes grew larger and brighter as she proceeded; for the more she talked of it, the more clearly she saw the place.

Miss Holweg put down the great basket and said: "Sit down, Rita; I have something pleasant to read to you."

But Rita was so full of the flowers and the woods that she could not attend. "I must go to Papa," she said; "I have so much to say to him," and she ran to the house. She was gone so long that Miss Holweg grew uneasy and sent Ella to look for her. "I think Papa has gone out," she said; "I heard him say at table that he had planned a long walk." Ella went; but did not come back, so Miss Holweg followed her.

It was perfectly still inside. Nobody in the sitting-room—nobody in the kitchen! She went upstairs to the children's room, nobody there! Mrs. Feland was asleep in the next room. The governess went out again, and met Ella, who said she had been looking for Rita everywhere; but there was no trace of her. They ran to the shed where Caspar's wife was putting down straw for the goats. She had seen Rita go into the house some time before; but had heard nothing of her since.

Where could the child be? A vigorous search was begun. The woman ran to the next house; but the door was shut and nobody was there. Then she remembered that Martin had gone to the cliff above to make hay to-day and that all the family went with him. This news made Miss Holweg more uneasy. What was to be done? Could the child have followed the people

up to the cliff, or have gone with the boy whom she had seen yesterday? The more she thought of it, the more probable this appeared. It seemed best to ascertain this before alarming her mother. Caspar's wife offered to go up and see, and Miss Holweg promised to reward her well if she would go quickly and save the mother from anxiety, if possible.

But the way was longer than it seemed, and long before the messenger returned Mrs. Feland came out of her room and wished the children to walk with her.

Then everything had to be explained. At first she wished to go out herself to look for the child, but Miss Holweg was so certain that Caspar's wife would bring her back that she was persuaded to wait for the return of the woman. She ran from one window to another, to the door, and then around the house; the time was so long!

At last, after two long hours, the woman came back, panting and glowing with heat; but —she came alone, without Rita. Martin and his family had gone up early in the morning, and none of them had seen the child since yesterday.

The poor mother could no longer restrain her grief. "Oh, if only my husband were here!" she cried. "Where can we find anybody to

look for her? What shall we do? My good woman, what can we do?"

The woman offered to go to all the houses about and summon the people to begin the search before it grew dark.

"If only everybody were not away getting hay!" she lamented. But she started out at once.

Ella, who now seemed to understand what might have befallen Rita, began to weep bitterly. "Oh, Mamma! perhaps Rita has fallen into the stream which rages so fearfully, or perhaps she has lost her way in the woods!" she sobbed. "Let us go at once into the forest; she must be terribly afraid."

Her mother assented to this, and, taking her hand, they hastened up to the edge of the forest. Miss Holweg ran after them, hardly knowing, in her distress, what she did. One hour after another passed. Night came on, but no trace of Rita. Mrs. Feland's strength failed her and she had to go home. Ella sat weeping near her mother when Mr. Feland returned and learned what had happened. He entreated his wife to quiet herself and get some rest, and leave him to do everything possible to find the child.

Then he went to Martin's house—for his first thought was that Rita had strayed off with her friend of yesterday. Martin met him at

the door. He was just coming out to join in the search. Mr. Feland asked him to gather all the men in the neighbourhood, provide them with lanterns, and send one division to the heights above to search, and the other into the deep woods with him.

So the men went out into the night, and Mrs. Feland at home heard the clock strike the hours, one after another; but the night was so long! Ella came from time to time to see if her mother were sleeping, and together they prayed that Rita might be kept from harm, and Papa be shown the way to her.

The night passed and the sun rose above the mountains, lighting up field and forest as if it shone upon nothing but joy. Mrs. Feland sank back on her pillow, exhausted. Weariness finally overcame her, and she lost her trouble and care for a time in a light slumber.

CHAPTER V

The Next Day

Pale and troubled, Mr. Feland came home in the golden morning light. One could see by his clothes that he had pressed through many thorns

and brier bushes. His wife heard his step at once, and called anxiously: "Have you brought her?"

He sat down near her, buried his face in his hands, and said, almost inaudibly: "I come alone. I can hope no more and think no more. In what condition shall we find the child after the long night—nearly or quite dead?"

"Oh no, Papa," cried Ella, who had come up softly; "God has certainly guarded our Rita. Mamma and I have prayed so much for her."

Her father arose. "We have searched through the thicket in every direction all night. She cannot be there. Now we must go down into the ravine by the Waldbach."

He spoke these words with a trembling voice; the suspicion had gained upon him that the child had fallen into the Waldbach. He had ordered a good breakfast for the men at Martin's, after which they were to search again. They were still at the table when Mr. Feland entered, and were discussing what it was best to do. Seppli stood looking on with eyes and ears wide open. Mr. Feland sat down, and a sudden quiet fell on the company; they saw how great his anxiety and fear were.

Suddenly Seppli said, briefly: "I know where she is."

"You must not speak so foolishly, Seppli,"

said his father, in his gentle way; "you were up haying when she went off. You can know nothing about it."

Mr. Feland began to ask about ropes and other necessary things, and, while the talk was going on, Seppli said, half aloud: "I know where she is."

Mr. Feland caught him by the hand, and said kindly: "Look at me, my boy, and tell me truly: Do you know anything about the child?"

"Yes," was the short answer.

"But speak, boy! Have you seen her? Where has she gone?" asked the father, in great excitement.

"I will show you," said Seppli, going to the door. Everybody rose, not knowing how to treat the matter; but Mr. Feland followed the boy without hesitation.

"Seppli, Seppli!" called his father, warningly, "I fear you have promised what you cannot do."

Seppli, however, trudged on firmly. Mr. Feland followed; and the men went too, hesitatingly.

When the boy turned towards the forest, they stopped, and one said: "It is quite useless to follow. We have looked there and found nothing. We will not go." Even Martin said he did not trust the boy; still, he

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followed with Mr. Feland. Seppli marched straight on into the thick woods; suddenly he turned to the left, towards the old fir trees, where they saw the gleam of something red.

Through the low underbrush Seppli steered on to an open place where there was a cluster of bushes with red flowers. Here he stood still, and looked around, a little discomfited. He had evidently expected to find Rita there. Then he went on firmly. The flowering plants grew less frequent, but larger. Seppli paused a moment at each one and looked, then proceeded still to the left. "No, Seppli! this will not do," said his father; "this path leads to the great precipice."

But at the same moment a bright mass of red glowed before them; the sun lighted up a bush covered completely with the bright flowers. Seppli ran to it quickly. This brought him close to the edge of the precipice which extends down into the deep abyss. He looked around and over the flowers down the steep wall of rock. Then he turned back. Mr. Feland stood hopelessly behind him; the end of the path was reached, and the child was not found! Martin caught the boy, and tried to draw him back from the perilous place; but Seppli said, in his brief way: "She is lying down there."

Mr. Feland started and leaned over the cliff — a deathly pallor overspread his face; he

stepped back and leaned against the nearest tree to support himself, motioning to Martin, who went to the edge and looked down. A bush grew out here and there from the rocky wall, and at a fearful distance below there was a narrow projection on which, pressed closely to the cliff, lay a little form, motionless, with her face turned towards the rock.

"Alas, it is true, she lies there!" said Martin, shuddering; "but whether living or—" he did not finish; a look at Mr. Feland closed his lips. The poor man looked as if he himself were about to fall dead. But he mastered himself. "Martin," he said, in a low tone, "there is no time to lose; a movement, and the child falls into the ravine. Who will go down? Who will get her?"

The other men had now come up, having followed the little guide curiously but hopelessly. One after the other they looked over the cliff. "Come," said Mr. Feland, with a trembling voice, "there is not a moment to lose. Who will do it? Who dares?"

The men looked at each other. No one spoke. One stepped to the edge, looked over, shrugged his shoulders, and turned away. "If we only knew that she was alive," said another; "but one might risk his life, perhaps, for no good."

"Who knows that she is not alive?" cried Mr. Feland, almost beside himself, "and if she stirs, she is lost! Oh, is it not possible?"

"She would have fallen long ago," said another, "if she were alive; she could not lie so still. And, sir, if a man should fall down there, the largest reward would do him no good."

One after another they all stepped back. Mr. Feland looked doubtfully about him. There was no prospect of any help. "I will go myself," he cried, "only tell me how!"

"No, sir," said Martin, quietly; "that will not do. Then two lives will be lost—that is certain. But I will do it, with God's help. I have little ones and I know how a father feels." Before he had finished he fastened a large rope around the trunk of the old fir tree; then he threw off his cap, prayed softly, took firm hold of the rope and slid down the cliff. He reached the narrow projection. Grasping the rope tightly with his left hand, he strove to gain a footing on the shelf of rock in order to be able to take up the child with his right hand. Very softly he let himself down; if the child were still alive and should be startled, a quick movement would be fatal. She lay motionless. Martin bent over and laid his broad, firm hand on the child. At the same instant she tried to turn over. She would have been dashed

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down far below, but Martin's hand held her. She moved her head, and a pair of great wondering eyes looked up at the man.

"God be praised!" said Martin, breathing deeply; "say so, too, little one—if you can still speak."

"Yes, I can speak! God be praised!" said the child, in a fresh voice. Martin looked in amazement at the child, who was entirely unharmed.

"You must be very precious in God's sight. He has done a wonder for you, which you must not forget your whole life long, little one," he said, seriously. Then he lifted the child up with his strong right hand. "Now, you must put both arms around my neck, very tightly, as if I were your dear papa; for, see! I cannot hold you—I have to use both my hands to get up."

"Yes, yes, I will hold on," declared Rita, and she clasped the man so tightly he could hardly breathe.

But how glad he was! He now began to clamber up the rocky wall. It was no easy thing; the blood ran from his hands and feet. Sometimes he had to rest for a moment. Mr. Feland and the men above were looking on with bated breath to see the man swaying over the abyss below. Can he hold out? Will he climb up? Or will his strength leave him? Will he slip

rescued her. The mother shuddered at the account, and pressed the child more closely to her heart.

"Were you not almost dead with fear?" asked Ella, struggling with her tears.

"Oh, no, I was not afraid," said Rita, cheerfully. "I will tell you how it was. First, I wanted to go in and ask Papa if I could go with Seppli to the red flowers; but Papa was gone. But I thought he would certainly let me; so I went to Seppli's but Seppli was gone too. Then I thought I could find the flowers alone, for Seppli had told me where to go. So I went up into the forest. I looked for a long time and did not find them; but all at once I saw something red behind the trees, and I ran there. At first there were not many flowers and not very red; but Seppli had said one must go farther into the woods. I did so and kept finding more flowers, and at last a large bush with so many beautiful red flowers that I wished to have them all, and then all at once I fell and found myself lying on a stone. But it was very narrow, so I pressed close against the cliff and thought—'I will lie very still, and Papa will come and find me.' But I was tired, and night was coming—and I thought—'Now I must sleep, and Papa will come in the morning.' Then I thought that I must pray that the good

God would send his angels to protect me while I slept, and I prayed:

“ ‘ Spread out Thy wings above me—
O Christ who e’er doth love me—
And shelter me this night!
If evil hovers near me,
May angels sing to cheer me,
And bring me to the light.’

Then I slept well until the man came, and I knew at once that Papa had sent him.”

Breathlessly her mother had listened to this story, and her father could not conceal his joy.

“ But my little grasshopper must not go another step alone,” he said, in as serious a tone as his joy would allow. The mother had not yet heard who had finally put them on the right track, and Seppli now came into the story. “ We must remember the little fellow especially,” said Mr. Feland, and Rita sprang down from the bed, eager to do something immediately. What could it be, though? What could she give him at once?

“ He shall tell us what he wishes most,” said her father; “ we must see what would make him happiest.”

“ Can I go now?” asked Rita, eagerly.

Her Papa assented, and said he would go too, to speak with Martin and reward the other men.

Rita jumped for joy, thinking of Seppli.

"But, Papa, if he should wish for a menagerie of the largest animals there are?" she asked.

"Then he shall have it," was the decided answer.

"But, Papa, suppose he should wish for a Turkish costume, with a curved sabre, like cousin Karl's?"

"He shall have it," was the answer.

"But, Papa, suppose he should wish for a great fort and twelve boxes of soldiers, like Karl's?"

"He shall have it," replied her father.

Rita now darted towards Seppli, who stood in the door. "Come, Seppli," she called, "now you can wish for the most beautiful thing in the world."

Seppli frowned as he looked at her, as if her words had awakened an unpleasant memory.

Finally he said, sadly: "That would do no good."

"Yes, indeed it would," responded Rita. "You found me, and now you can wish for whatever you please, and you shall have it. Papa says so. Think now, and then tell what it is."

Gradually Seppli seemed to understand the thing. He looked earnestly at Rita, drew a long breath, and said: "A whip with a yellow snapper."

"No, Seppli, that is nothing," said Rita,

indignantly; "you must not wish for such a thing. Think of the best thing, and wish for that."

Seppli thought again, then he drew another deep breath, and said: "A whip with a yellow snapper."

Mr. Feland now came out of the house with the men, who took their leave with many thanks.

"I have offered you nothing yet," said Mr. Feland to Martin. "I should like to show my gratitude to you in a way which would do you the most good. Tell me, have you any especial wish?"

Martin twirled his cap; then he said, hesitatingly: "I have wished for something for a long time, but I do not care to mention it; no, no! it ought not to have come into my mind."

"Do not be afraid," said Mr. Feland, encouragingly; "perhaps I can help you."

"I have always thought," said Martin, slowly, "that I should like to have a cow as my neighbour has; I have good hay—and then I could support my family without any trouble."

"Good!" said Mr. Feland; "I shall see you again."

Then he took Rita's hand, and they turned towards home. "And what does your friend Seppli wish?" he asked.

"Oh, he is silly," said Rita; "he only wishes for a whip with a yellow snapper! That is nothing."

"Oh, yes!" said her father. "Every boy has his own desires. Such a whip would please Seppli as much as the loveliest doll-house would you."

Rita was quite satisfied with this explanation, and could hardly wait for the wish to be carried out.

The next day Mr. Feland made a journey down to the valley. Rita knew why, and she jumped for joy the whole morning. She was charged not to stir a step from the house alone, and Miss Holweg had resolved not to lose sight of her for one minute—which was rather difficult on this day.

Two days later, as Martin and his family were sitting down to the table, on which the potatoes were steaming, the lowing of a cow was heard before the door.

"Caspar's cow must have run away," said Martin, as he went to look out.

Seppli wished to see too, and Martheli, Friedli, and Betheli followed. Last of all came their mother to bring them back.

Martin stood outside in motionless astonishment, and all the others were gazing with wide-open eyes. A beautiful brown cow was tied

near the house; so large and fine a cow was only seen now and then among the rich farmers.

A long whip was fastened to one horn.

A paper was wound around the handle, on which was written—"For Seppli".

Martin handed it to the boy, saying: "It is yours."

Seppli held it silently, hardly daring to think that the most beautiful and splendid thing in the world could be his own. And he could drive the cow too, and snap his whip like Yorg and Cheppi!

The cow began to low, and Martin said: "It is time to milk her. Bring out a pail, Seppli, and we will have a feast to-day."

A basin of milk was placed on the table, beside the potatoes, and then the whole family led the cow to the shed in triumph.

Mr. Feland and his children had been watching these proceedings from Caspar's house; Rita had been especially anxious to know how the whip was received.

When Mrs. Feland was strong enough, they all went up to the cliff one day to thank God on the very spot where his protecting power had been so wonderfully displayed.

ROSENRESLI

CHAPTER I

The Rose Season

Rosenresli lived in Wildbach with her uncle Dietrich, who had squandered his property, and was now without work and without means. He spent his days and nights at the village inn, and everybody knew that his last bit of land, the house, and the goat would soon be taken to pay his debts there. His wife had died a year before, and after that Dietrich went on from bad to worse so rapidly that everybody wondered how the child still looked so fresh and blooming. She was now eight years old, and was called Rosenresli, because she was never seen without a rose in her hand, or in her mouth, or pinned on her dress; for Resli—Therese was her real name—had such a love for roses that she would stop at every garden she passed and look in with

her merry blue eyes, until the people inside called: "Would you like one?"

And Rosenresli, beaming with joy, would put her hand through the fence and receive the treasure. Everybody knew and liked the merry child.

She did not see much of her uncle. In the morning she went to school, and at noon he usually said: "I shall not come home this evening. You can find something to eat for yourself."

But the cupboard was bare; and if the children at school had not given her now and then apples or pears or a piece of bread, she would often have been hungry; but even her hunger was forgotten in her joy in the roses.

One bright summer afternoon the child went springing gaily over the fields. Butterflies were fluttering about in the sunshine, and the swallows were on the wing.

Rosenresli soon reached her destination. She stood by the fence of a rose-garden and looked wistfully at the beautiful flowers.

"Come in!" called a voice from behind the trees. "I know what you want. You shall have plenty of roses to-day."

Rosenresli darted in, ran straight to the fragrant bed of roses, and gazed admiringly at the mass of red and white flowers.

" You have come just at the right time to-day, Resli," said the lady who owned the garden. " You shall have a great bunch of roses; but some of them are almost ready to fall to pieces, and you will have to carry them very carefully." She cut a bunch of the most beautiful for the child, who ran towards home in great delight. Her way led her past a miserable dwelling where lived a sad-faced woman whom she had always heard called " Mother Grief ". And Resli never suspected that she had any other name.

" Look! look!" she cried, as she saw the poor woman at the window; " did you ever see such roses?"

" No, Resli; not for a long time," answered the woman, and the child went on quite lost in the fragrance and beauty of her bouquet. She reached the last house on the street, and was about to turn when a woman came out and stood looking at her.

" You are a real Rosenresli to-day," she called. " Come, show me your treasures."

Resli turned quickly and held up her bouquet. The quick movement shook off some leaves, which fell to the ground. Rosenresli looked at them sadly.

" It is a pity," said the woman. " They would have been just right for me. Little one, give me your roses, and I will give you a good

piece of bread and butter. You cannot carry them much farther. When you get home you will have only stems in your hand. Come, give them to me."

"What, all my roses, and not keep any?" asked Resli, in surprise.

"You can keep one; this one is the best; the others will soon fall to pieces, and I can use the leaves." She gathered them up swiftly in her apron, while Resli stuck one in her dress.

Then the woman brought out a piece of dry bread, which made the child remember that she was very hungry. "I will tell you something, Resli," said the woman. "Take a basket and go every evening where there are roses and ask for those which fall off. Put them in your basket and bring them to me, for I use the leaves; and every evening when you bring me a nice lot of them, I will give you a good piece of bread. Will you do it?"

"Yes, indeed," said Resli, as she turned towards home, eating her bread contentedly. She passed again by the house of Mother Grief, who was bringing home some wood which she had been picking up.

"What have you done with your beautiful roses?" she asked. Resli told her the whole story, and how she was going to carry rose-

leaves every day to the woman who lived at the cross-roads.

The woman listened carefully, and then said, almost timidly: "Resli, would you come to me to-morrow before you carry her the roses? I should like to ask you something."—"Yes, that I will. Good night, Mother Grief," and the child went on her way.

When she reached her uncle's house, there was no one there. She had no candle to light, and she did not need to lock the doors. Like a bird she sought her nest in the dim light, and soon slept peacefully; perhaps she dreamed about her roses.

CHAPTER II

A Little Helper and Great Help

The woman whom people called Mother Grief was a very poor widow. She had seen better days, and could not beg; so she suffered in silence, and told her needs only to God, who was her only comforter. Her husband had not lived long, and had left her only one son, whom she wished to be a tailor like his father. But Joseph did not like the business, and he would run away from his work and not come home

until late at night. So he got into bad company, and the town overseer said he would send him away to Australia if he did not work and try to do better. This made Joseph angry, and he disappeared from the town. His mother grieved deeply, but she left him with the good God; and when the people said mockingly: "What good have all your prayers done? you are left in misery, and Joseph will certainly come to some miserable end;" then she would answer: "And if I must be Mother Grief to the end of time and die in misery, yet I will trust in God. He can guide my Joseph in the right way; my prayers for him will not be in vain."

The next day, as soon as school was done, Rosenresli set out again. She had no basket; but she could carry the roses in her apron. Hopping and skipping she came to the large garden, where the lady was again walking about among the flower-beds.

"Would you like more roses, Resli?" she called. "Come in; there must be certainly one or two for you."

"Give only those which are ready to fall," said Resli, holding her apron.

"If you care for those, you may have an apronful," said the lady, leading her to a large bed of roses which were in full bloom, of which she cut off a great quantity.

" May I come again to-morrow?" asked Resli, eagerly.

" Yes, indeed," said the lady; " you may have them all, if they give you any pleasure."

Rosenresli thanked her and ran joyfully away. When she reached the tumble-down house of Mother Grief, she remembered her promise and went in. The woman was at her spinning-wheel. She greeted Resli kindly; then she cut two fine red roses from her little rose bush in the window and held them towards the child.

" I wished to ask you, Resli," she said, hesitating, " if you would take these, too; perhaps she will give a little bread for these, if only a very small bit."

" Yes, yes," said the child quickly, " I will be back soon, and bring you the bread."

The woman at the cross-roads was standing in her vegetable garden, near the house, examining a basket of rose-leaves which were drying in the sun. She made rose-water from the dried leaves. " Good!" she said as Resli opened her apron, " you shall have a large piece of bread to-day."

" I have two more," said Resli, holding up Mother Grief's little roses.

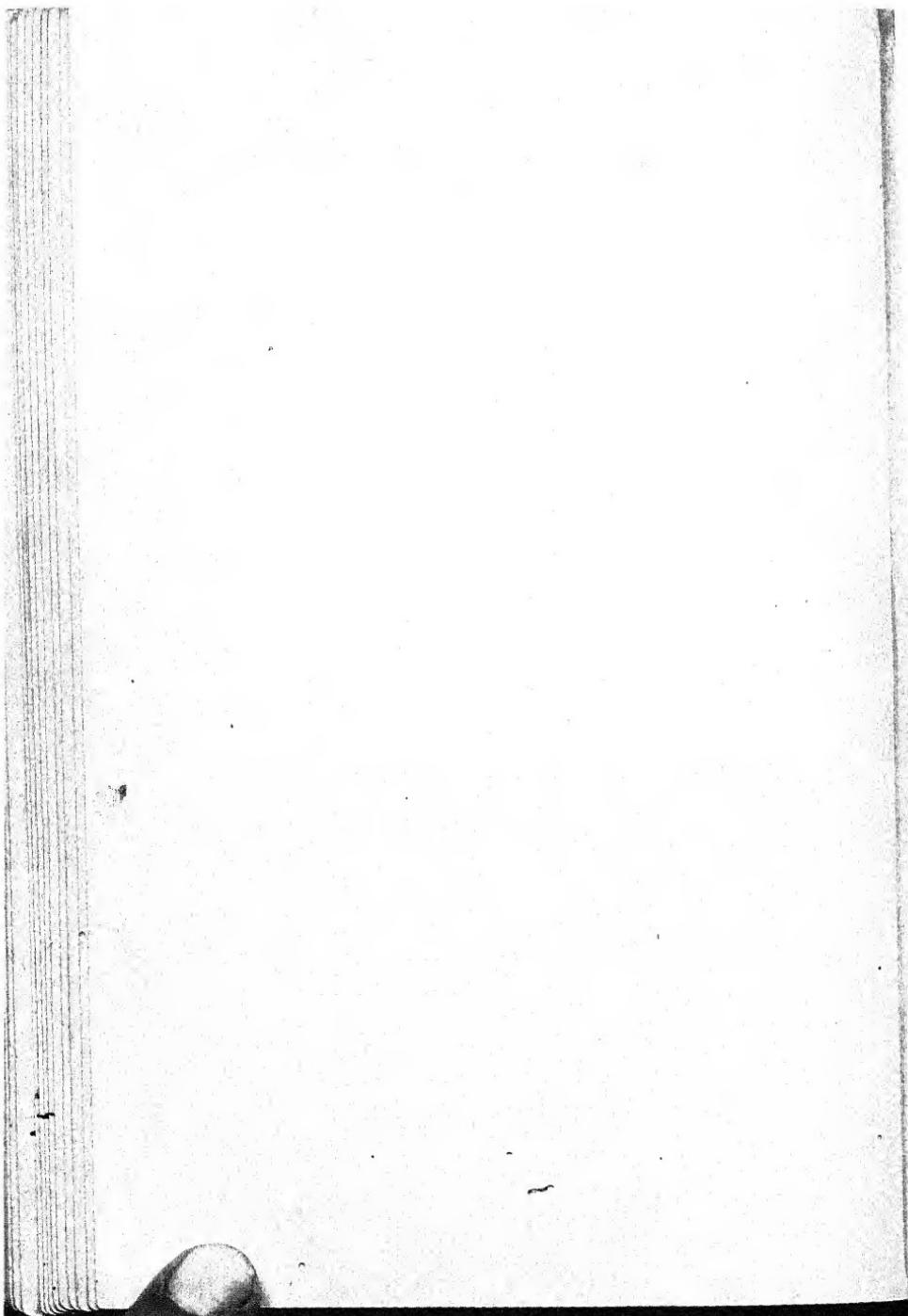
" Throw them in with the others; they are small; but still they have a few leaves."



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"But I should like a separate piece of bread for them," said Resli, still holding them in her hand.

"I know," said the woman, going into the house. "It used to be so with us. We were always exchanging things at school—a bit of bread for a pear or a couple of plums. That is all right. Here is a large piece for the rose-leaves, and a small one for the little roses. Are you satisfied?"

"Yes, certainly," said Resli, with many thanks. She put the small piece of bread in her apron for Mother Grief, and the large one was soon consumed, for she had had nothing to eat since morning.

"Here, Mother Grief, here is your bread!" called Resli, as she came to the cottage.

The woman pressed the child's hand gratefully. "You do not know how much good this will do me," she said. "I have nothing to eat but the potatoes which I raise in my garden, and sometimes I cannot eat them; bread is too dear for me to buy; and when I do not have food, I am so weak that I cannot spin. So I am very glad of this bread."

Rosenresli was quite troubled that she had brought the small piece and kept the large one, and looked downcast. The woman thought she must be hungry, and offered her the bread.

But Resli said: "No, no, I do not want it.

I have had enough. I will come again to-morrow," and she was gone.

The next evening she came punctually again. She had her apron full of rose-leaves, and Mother Grief had two more roses to break off. When she poured the rose-leaves out of her apron, she said: "May I have one piece of bread to-day as large as the two together?"

"I thought of that," said the woman. "It is a pity to exchange good bread for apples or pears. That is right, and you shall have a nice fresh piece to-day."

She went into the kitchen and cut off a larger slice than Resli had ever held in her hand before; but she ran quickly to Mother Grief and laid the whole slice in her hand.

"What is this, Resli? This is your bread. Come, take it! I shall be grateful for only a small bit of it."

"No, no! I shall not take a crumb," said the child. "Good night. To-morrow I will come again."

"I have no more roses, Resli, but I thank you. You do not know how much good you have done me."

The woman had tears in her eyes as she called after the child; but Resli's heart was full of joy as she sprang home and thought of what she would do the next day.

The roses were soon gone in the garden where she had been; but she knew so many gardens in the region that she was not at all troubled, and no distance was too great for her.

So she brought her apron full every evening; but she never ate the bread. She always took it to Mother Grief, and insisted that she must eat it. The poor woman often told Resli how much stronger she felt when she had bread every day, so that she could earn more by her spinning to keep her through the winter, and she always ended with: "If I only could reward you, Resli, for what you do for me!" But Resli's face beamed so that one could see that she had her reward already.

So things went on until the rose-season was over, and one evening when Rosenresli brought only three half-faded roses in her apron, the woman said: "This is the end of the roses; but next year you can bring me some more."

It troubled Resli greatly to think of Mother Grief with nothing but potatoes to eat, and she began to cry.

"No, no! you must not cry, Resli," said the woman, kindly. "If you will promise to bring me as many roses next summer, you shall have your piece of bread every day this winter. Will you?"

The tears were quickly dried, and Resli answered: "Yes, indeed, I will. You shall have all the roses, and forget-me-nots too."

"That is not necessary; but don't forget the roses. It is now time for apples, and you must have some with your bread—here, Resli!" And the woman plucked a large, red-cheeked apple, and gave it to the child. Resli ran off with her treasures in great glee, and Mother Grief had a cheerful evening too. Resli always brought sunshine into the solitary room, and when she told what had taken place, the woman folded her hands and gave thanks for the child who had come to her like a good angel to make her life more comfortable during the dreaded winter.

CHAPTER III

Rosenresli's Trouble

Some days after, a wonderful change seemed to have taken place. The woman sat with a peaceful, cheerful face at her spinning-wheel—when Resli entered looking as if every pleasure had been destroyed forever for her.

"What is the matter, Resli? What is the matter?" asked Mother Grief, in alarm.

"I have a rent in my dress," she sobbed out, "and the children at school laughed at me. They ran behind me and sang:

"' Rosenresli, Rosiness,
Rosenresli, hole in her dress!'"

And the child wept bitterly at the remembrance.

"It is not right for the children to laugh at you. Perhaps it was not unkindly meant, though. Come here and show me the place. We will make it all right," said the woman, comfortingly.

It did not take long to find the hole, for it was very large. The child sat down on the stool, a needle and thread were brought, and the work begun. But Resli could not forget her grief, and still sobbed. "Do not cry, Resli," said the woman, kindly. "You shall never have such a grief again. I will look at your dress every night, and mend all the little holes. And when you tear it come to me, and I will put it in order. Can't you feel happy now?"

"Yes," said Resli, relieved as she wiped her tears away; "only I hope they will not sing any more: 'Rosenresli, rosiness', or I can never go to school again."

"Yes, yes, Resli, you must do that, or you

would never learn anything. And listen—we must not run away from any trouble which meets us; we must be quiet and bear it, because God wishes to teach us a lesson in that way which we could learn in no other. When we are in trouble and sorrow, we seek help and comfort from Him, and learn to know Him, and then confidence comes into our hearts, because we find that we have a Father in Heaven, who hears when we call. Do you pray to Him, Resli?"

The child thought a little, and said: "Yes, in school."

"How do you pray in school?"

Resli began to repeat rapidly these words:

"How pleasant is the morning hour
Which is with God begun.

A joyful heart, a thankful tongue,
A Christian child become."

Then she drew a deep breath, and said:
"There, I don't know any more."

"It is a beautiful verse, only you repeated it a little too fast, Resli. Have you thought what it means?"

"No, I have not," replied Resli.

"It means that in the morning, when you awake, you should think first of the good God, and should rejoice and thank Him that He has

kept you through the night. That is a morning prayer. But do you know a prayer for evening?"

"No, not any."

"Then, you can pray from your heart, and ask God for pardon if you have done anything wrong during the day, and ask for help to do better another time. It makes one cheerful to be able to pray so. I should long ago have died of grief if I could not do that."

"Why?" asked Resli, in astonishment.

"I have reason enough. I am so very poor, and have almost no means of support. My only son is out in the world, and I know nothing of him—perhaps he is already dead; and if I could not commend him every night to the good God, and say, 'He is Thine; help him!' my care and anxiety would not let me sleep; but when I pray my heart is comforted."

"I will help you pray for him," said Resli.

"That rejoices me, child; and if you pray for Joseph, you will get good from it yourself, and you may need to pray in earnest for yourself."

"Why?" asked Resli.

"Listen, child," said the woman, tenderly, but anxiously. "Your uncle has managed badly. People say that his house and field will soon be taken from him; then you must go among strangers, where there will be much

hard work and few kind words. You do not know yet what it is; and then it will be well if you know the way to God for comfort and help."

"But I will come to you, and live with you," said Resli, rather pleased than disturbed.

"Ah, you good child, I could not provide for you; something else must be done. But we will trust all to our good Father; He will take care of you. So, now it is all mended," said Mother Grief, who had been repairing the child's dress during this conversation. "When you tear it again, come to me, and I will help you."

Resli expressed her thanks, and sprang away with a light heart. She was so happy over the certainty of never being laughed at again in school that she did not think of the possibility of going among strangers. She did not forget her promise, and when she lay down to sleep she prayed aloud, "Dear God, help Joseph!"

A long hard winter followed. Mother Grief was often cold, but never so hungry as the previous winter, and so she kept her strength. Rosenresli was her helper and supporter. Late in the autumn she had seen the poor woman dragging home a bundle of wood, and since then she had been in the woods every day, and brought her sticks enough to heat her little

room and cook her broth; and every night, after school, in spite of storms, colds, and snow, Rosenresli appeared at the cross-roads, often trembling with the cold in every limb, for, although she had another dress for the winter, it was not a warm one, and she had only a thin shawl to wear over it.

The woman cut her large slices of bread, supposing she must be very hungry to come in the cold every day; but she carried it to Mother Grief, and always refused to eat even half of it. She often went hungry to bed; but she was glad to think that her friend was not in want, and prayed, "Dear God, help Joseph!" as she fell peacefully asleep.

CHAPTER IV

Mother Grief no Longer

Summer had come again, and fragrant roses were blooming in all the gardens. The golden light of a summer evening flooded the fields and forests around Wildbach.

Dietrich's little house was gilded by the setting sun. Two men with anxious faces stood in front of it. One was Dietrich himself, who

knew that his house and field would be taken the next day to pay his debts, and even then all would not be paid. He put both hands in his pockets, and said carelessly: "I am going off; I do not wish to hear any more about it."

"You must not forget that you can be found," said the other. "I will take the child. She cannot work, that is true—you have allowed her to run about so long—but I will soon bring her to it. There are several hours after school, and she must help me then."

"She is still young," said Resli's uncle.

"So much the more easy to learn," responded the other, as he departed.

This man worked on the roads in Wildbach, digging up and removing the weeds. All the children were afraid of him and ran out of his way, for he was cross and rough and never spoke a kind word. It had been arranged that Rosenresli should go to this man early the next day; but the child knew nothing of it. She was walking contentedly away to the mill, where there was a garden full of the most splendid roses; and the miller's wife had promised her a bouquet. Resli soon came back down the same street in the golden sunset light with her roses in her hand.

A young man came up behind her, walking rapidly. "You have beautiful roses," he said

as he overtook her; "will you give me one for my hat?"

Resli nodded, and drew out a rose.

"That is good of you. You give me the best," said the stranger, as he placed it on his hat. "How far are you going?"

"I am going home to Wildbach," was the answer.

"Ah, then we are going the same way," said the traveller. "If you are from Wildbach, tell me if Mrs. Steinman is still living, and if she is well."

"I do not know her," said Resli. "There is nobody of that name."

"Alas! alas!" sighed the stranger, and was silent. Resli looked at him in amazement, for from time to time he wiped away a tear, and no longer looked cheerful as before.

After a long pause, the stranger began again: "Do you know the way to the cross-roads?"

Resli nodded very decidedly. "I go there every day."

"Then tell me who lives in the old tumble-down house on the left, by the crooked willow tree."

"Mother Grief lives there; I know her very well."

"What a name that is! Has she no other?"

"I don't know any."

"Is she called so, because she has had so much trouble? Do you know that?"

"Yes, she has trouble because she does not know whether Joseph is safe or not."

"Ah me! ah me!" cried the stranger, and strode past Resli; but he turned again, and taking the child's hand, said kindly: "Come, we will go together and talk a little," and he looked so good and kind that Resli felt entirely at ease. "Tell me," he began again, "is Mother Grief angry with Joseph?"

"Oh, no! she prays for him every night; otherwise she could not sleep at all—and I help her."

"So? And how do you pray for him?"

"I say: 'Dear God, help Joseph.'"

"Perhaps the good God has heard you, and has helped him."

"Do you think so?" asked Resli, looking in surprise at the stranger, whose face wore a look of joy.

But now they had reached the crooked willow tree, a few steps from the old house.

"Good-bye!" said Resli, holding out her hand. "I am going to Mother Grief."

"I am going with you," he said, quickly.

But before they opened the door, Mother Grief rushed out, threw her arms around the stranger, and called again and again: "Oh,

Joseph! Joseph! is it really you?" And she wept for joy, Joseph weeping with her.

When Resli understood that the stranger was Joseph who had returned to his mother in not at all so shabby a condition as she had pictured him, she could not contain her joy, and clung to the weeping mother, saying continually: "The good God has helped him."

They now went into the cottage, and Mother Grief's heart overflowed with joy and gratitude to see that her son had not at all the appearance of one who had been in deep misery, as she had fancied.

"Come, Mother, come," he called. "Let us have something to eat. Can the child bring us something?"

"She does that all the time," said his mother. "How much good she has brought to me, and now my son! Where did you find him?"

"That I will tell you; but let Resli go now and bring us a sausage and a loaf of bread," said Joseph, laying a gold piece on the table.

"A whole loaf!" said Resli, in amazement; it seemed almost incredible to her.

The child was soon back, and they had a feast such as had rarely been known in that room. The mother could hardly eat for joy, and kept saying: "Is it really true, Joseph?" And he would answer gaily, and give Resli

another piece of bread, until she said: "No, no, I will not eat any more; it is for Mother Grief."

Then he replied: "Eat, and do not have any care. My mother shall never want again."

And when the meal was over, he said: "Now I will tell you all that has happened to me. You know I was to be sent to Australia, and I ran away. I went to England, and then I had no money to get farther. I had a hard struggle there to support life. I think you prayed me through that, Mother. Sometimes, when I was almost driven to desperation, I seemed to hear you praying as you used to in your room beside me, and then I saw you before me, and could not do the evil deed that would have killed you, and I began to work again. I had work in machine-shops, and gradually I advanced. One can learn something in nine years if he wishes, and I had the desire, so that I am now a skilled mechanic, and I shall soon find work. And life shall be very different with you. No one must call you 'Mother Grief' again. See, I bring you what I have saved!" and Joseph laid his well-earned money on the table before his mother, while the joy of his heart shone in his eyes.

"Ah, to think that you have earned all that by hard work, Joseph! I do not know how I can

give thanks for this; it is almost too much!" and she folded her hands in thanksgiving.

"But tell me how life has gone with you," said her son.

"There is not much to tell, Joseph," she answered. "I have had bitter days, and much trouble; otherwise, they would not have named me 'Mother Grief'. Last year I thought I could not live through the winter; but this child came to me like an angel from heaven. She supported me through the winter, and I know that she often brought me her bread, and went hungry herself. And now I have only one trouble, Joseph. Resli lives with her Uncle Dietrich, who will lose his house and land tomorrow, and the child must go among strangers, and who knows how she will be treated!"

"What? The child that has helped you, Mother?" Joseph broke in, hastily. "We have enough for the child; I will go to Dietrich. We will not give up Rosenresli," and he hastened to the door, and was gone.

Resli sprang up, threw her arms around the woman's neck, and cried for joy: "Mother Grief! Mother Grief! Now I can stay with you!"

And the woman held the child firmly, and said: "Oh, Resli, how thankful we should be! Our whole life is not long enough to show our

gratitude. You must never call me Mother Grief again; but I will be a mother to you."

Dietrich was very glad to give Resli into Joseph's charge, and said: "Keep her now. Do not let her come home to sleep; but take her bed with you."

He thought the matter would be easier to arrange in this way with the man who was coming to take her in the morning. Joseph was quite satisfied with this, and took the little bed on his shoulders and placed it in the bedroom near his mother's, to Resli's unspeakable joy.

Joseph found his sleeping-room just as he had left it nine years before. Every day his mother had thought: "Perhaps he will come again, and then he must find a home." And he had found it. He found work, too, for he was a skilful, experienced workman.

Every morning when he went to work, Resli put a rose in his hat. This pleased Joseph, and gave him a real joy in his work, and he had his rose even when it was difficult to find, for everybody, far and near, had heard Rosenresli's story, and wherever she went she received a rose, even if it was the first or the last in the garden.

So in the smallest house in Wildbach live three of the happiest people, and Rosenresli will never lose her name.

LISA'S CHRISTMAS

CHAPTER I

Stanzeli and Seppli

The little village of Altkirch is situated among beautiful green, willow-covered hills, which encircle it completely, except on one side, where one can look across to the green Rechberg on whose summit stands another village which, like the mountain, bears the name of Rechberg. Between the two heights rushes the wild Zillerbach. A zigzag road leads down from Altkirch to the Zillerbach, across the old covered bridge, and on the other side zigzag again up to Rechberg, nearly two miles in all. Shorter and much pleasanter is the narrow foot-path, going directly down to the Zillerbach, where a narrow wooden foot-bridge spans the rushing stream. On all the green hills around, no human habitation is to be seen; but

near the foot-path is a solitary chapel, which for many long years has looked down upon the rushing stream and the little foot-bridge, which has many a time fallen away and been renewed during these years.

There are many poor people in Altkirch, for there is little work. Most of the men go as day-labourers to the farms in the vicinity. A few possess a little spot of land which they cultivate.

At the time of our story one of the poorest households was that of Joseph of the Willow, who lived in a lonely old house on the way to the chapel, quite by itself. The little house was almost entirely covered by the long, over-hanging boughs of an old willow tree, which had given to the owner the name of Joseph of the Willow. He had always lived in the little house, which had belonged to his father before him.

Now Joseph was an old man and had only an aged invalid wife and two grandchildren in the old house with him. His only son, Sepp, a careless, good-natured young man, had been away from them six years, and they did not even know where he was. He had married, early in life, an industrious young woman named Constance, whom everybody liked. She kept everything in the house in beautiful order, and Joseph and

his wife had a comfortable time while she lived; she worked early and late, and did not allow them to want for anything. "Father and Mother must rest now," she said, "they have done enough, and we two young people must make their last days pleasant." Sepp went every day to his work at the great farm on the other side of the Zillerbach, and brought home each week a nice sum of money.

Three years passed by in undisturbed peace.

Old Father Clemens, who lived in the great house behind Altkirch, said often, as he entered Joseph's home:

"Joseph, it is good to be with you; one never hears an angry word here; all honour to your good Constance." His kind eyes beamed with joy when Constance bade him welcome with her cheerful voice, and little Stanzeli stretched out her tiny hands towards him. Then he said again: "Yes, indeed, it is good to be here, Joseph."

When Stanzeli was two years old, little Seppli came into the world. That was a great joy for everybody; but, soon after, the saddest thing that could happen came to Joseph's home.

Constance was taken away from her husband and from her children. From that time Sepp seemed like one who had no further aim in life. A restless, uneasy feeling took possession of him.

He could no longer remain at home on Sundays. He spent more and more time away, until he finally left them altogether. For a long time he sent home money for the support of his children; but at last this stopped, and for six years nothing had been heard from him.

The two old people had grown poorer and poorer, and more and more feeble. Their only support came from the baskets which the old man wove from the willow-twigs and gave to the dairyman when he took his cheese to the city to market. He did not earn much in this way, and the closest economy was necessary to make both ends meet.

Stanzeli was now nine years old and Seppli seven. Stanzeli was the chief dependence of the family, for her grandmother had been ill now for more than four months. So she and her grandfather had to do the cooking, which was not very laborious, for there was nothing to cook but meal porridge and potatoes, and now and then a little coffee. But Stanzeli was too small to lift the kettle, and as Joseph did not understand how to put things together, the two were necessary in preparing a meal.

Seppli, too, assisted in the work by getting first in the way of one and then of the other, with eyes wide open in expectation of the wonderful porridge. It was useless to drive

him away, for he was back in two minutes.

One warm September day, when the sun was shining on the green fields around Altkirch, and some beams strayed through the dingy windows to the grandmother's bed, the old woman sighed and said: "Ah me! Does the sun shine still? If I could only go out again! But I would be willing to lie still if the bed were not as hard as wood and the pillow not much better! And when I think of the winter and the thin coverlet—it makes me cold already—I shall certainly freeze to death."

"Don't worry now about the winter," said the old man soothingly. "God will still be with us. He has already helped us many times when things looked dark. You must not forget that. How would you like a little coffee to warm you up?"

She thought she would like some very much, so Joseph went into the next room, which was the kitchen, to prepare it. He beckoned to Stanzeli to come with him, and when he had taken down the coffee-pot and poured some water into it, he said, "Stanzeli, what comes first?"

"I must grind the coffee beans," answered the child, and, seating herself on the footstool with the coffee-mill, she turned with all her might. But something was wrong. She looked here and there, and finally drew out the little drawer.

There, instead of the fine powder which should have been seen, lay great pieces as large as half a coffee bean.

With a cry, Stanzeli showed the drawer to her grandfather and pointed out the sad condition of things. He looked at the broken mill, and said quietly: "Don't make any noise that your grandmother can hear. It will make her unhappy, and she will think she can have no more coffee to drink. Just wait a little."

Thereupon he went out, and soon came back with a large stone in his hand, with which he pounded up the coffee kernels on a paper, and Stanzeli turned the coarsely pulverized mass into the pot. But as soon as the invalid took the little dish of coffee in her hand, she cried out complainingly: "Oh dear! Oh dear! Great grains of coffee are swimming about on the top; the coffee-mill is broken. Oh, if it only could have lasted! We are not able to buy a new one."

"Don't make yourself ill over it," said Joseph in a soothing tone. "Many things are brought about by patience."

"Yes," said his wife; "but no coffee-mill."

A little cup of the coffee was given to the children with their potato; for they had bread only on Sunday.

Then Joseph found some baskets which were

finished, and, binding them together in pairs, gave them to the children, and told them to set out at once, that they might get home in good season. They knew well where they had to go, for every two weeks they were sent on such an errand to the dairyman. He lived quite a distance from the little village. The way led over the hill, past the chapel, up to the forest, where his cottage stood.

The children started out together, and, since Stanzeli kept conscientiously on the way, Seppli had to do the same, although he would have preferred to stand still and look at this or that.

When they came to the chapel, Stanzeli paused for the first time and said: "Lay the baskets here on the ground, Seppli; we must go into the chapel and say 'Our Father'."

But Seppli was unwilling to go. "I do not wish to go in, it is too warm," he said, and seated himself on the ground.

"No, Seppli, come, we must do it," said Stanzeli. "Don't you remember that Father Clemens said that every time we pray, God sends us something, only we cannot always see it immediately?"

At length Seppli suffered himself to be persuaded, and went into the chapel without further objection. When they came out again a few minutes later they heard the sound of voices

coming from the foot-path which leads down to the Zillerbach.

Three heads appeared, one after the other, and at last three children, two boys and a girl, came into full view, who stared at the other two in astonishment.

CHAPTER II

A New Acquaintance

The largest of these children who appeared so unexpectedly, was the girl, who might have been eleven years old. One of her brothers was a year younger, perhaps, and the other was much younger and smaller, but very fat and firmly built.

The little girl moved a few steps nearer Stanzeli and Seppli, and asked:

“What are your names?”

The children gave their names.

“Where do you live?” was the next question.

“In Altkirch, there, you can see the church tower from here,” answered Stanzeli, pointing to the red tower between the hills.

“So you have your church there. We have such a church, too; but it is closed, and we go

into it only on Sunday. But we have no such chapels with us. There is another still higher above us; only look, Kurt, up by the forest."

The little girl pointed with her finger high above, and her brother nodded to indicate that he saw what she was pointing at. "I should like to know why you have so many chapels here on all the hills."

"So that we can go in and pray when we are passing by," said Stanzeli quickly.

"We can do that without them," responded the other girl, "we can pray everywhere, wherever we are. God hears everywhere; that I know."

"Yes," said Stanzeli gravely, "but though we are not commanded to go in and pray, we are permitted to do so. And then God always sends us something, even if we are not able to see it. Father Clemens has said so."

"Yes; but I would rather have something we can see," interposed the listening Seppli.

"Do you know Father Clemens, too?" asked Lisa, to whom he was well known.

"He lives in Altkirch, up in the old convent, and he comes often to see us," exclaimed Stanzeli. "Yes, and he sometimes brings grandmother a whole loaf of bread," added Seppli, who remembered this good act most vividly.

"I must go now," said Stanzeli, as she took

up her baskets. "We have still a long way to go."

"Won't you come some time to Rechberg to see me?" asked Lisa, who wanted to continue the acquaintance.

"I don't know the way. I have never been on the other side of the Zillerbach."

"Oh, it is very easy to find. Just cross the foot-bridge, then up and up until you come to the top. That is Rechberg. The large house which stands highest of all is ours. Do come soon. Come early some afternoon, so that we can play till evening."

So the children separated. Stanzeli and Seppli went on up the mountain, and Lisa looked about for her brothers, who had disappeared.

Kurt had climbed up an old pine tree near the chapel, and was rocking on a bough, which cracked in a most ominous manner. Lisa watched to see him come down, considering that event more amusing than dangerous.

Karl was lying on the ground near the pine tree, sound asleep.

Something came running down the hill, which brought Kurt from his lofty perch, and woke Karl from his sleep at once. It was a flock of sheep, young and old, great and small, all skipping, running, and bleating, while the great dog

barked continually. The shepherd was driving them towards Altkirch. The three children looked at the flock, as it went by, in silent admiration. As far as they could see, they watched the young lambs skipping along by the sober mothers. When they had all passed, Karl said, with a deep sigh: "If only we had a lamb like one of those!"

That was exactly what Kurt and Lisa thought at the same moment, and for once the three agreed perfectly.

Lisa immediately proposed that they should go home, and beg and beg for a lamb until they got it. She pictured to her brothers how they could take the lamb everywhere with them, and play with it in the pasture, until all three became so excited over the prospect, that they finally ran down the mountain and over the foot-bridge. Lisa went first, followed by Kurt, and they rushed so fast that the bridge swayed under their feet, and the loose boards moved up and down in such a manner that Karl, who was behind them, lost his footing, and almost fell into the rushing Zillerbach. Kurt turned and helped him up, and they finally reached the other side in safety.

It was a long way to Rechberg, and the lights had been brought into the sitting-room when the children came in sight of the house. Their

mother had been anxiously watching for them for more than an hour. She had seen nothing of them since dinner, and they should have been at home for four o'clock coffee. She had given them permission to spend their afternoon in the grove near by, of which they had availed themselves most joyfully.

Now it was dark; and there was no sight or sound of them. How could they be so late? She imagined all possible accidents, and ran from window to window, more and more anxious.

But now—ah! there were their voices! They came nearer! She ran out—yes—there they were coming up the mountain-side. As they saw their mother they ran faster, each trying to be the first to tell the story. Little Karl was left behind, but Kurt and Lisa came up breathless, eager to begin their tale at once.

At the same time a strong voice came from the opposite direction: "Supper! supper!"

It was the bailiff's, who had just returned from his business and wished to enforce the strict order of his household. When they were all seated at the supper table, the children were permitted to give an account of their day's adventures.

It seemed that Lisa had grown tired of the grove, and had proposed to climb up to the old linden, where there was a fine view of the

chapel, and the Zillerbach with its narrow bridge. Lisa had had a previous experience of the trembling and swaying of the little bridge, and an irresistible desire had seized her to visit the vicinity again.

Her brothers were very willing to join her, and the walk was begun which proved a much longer one than they had anticipated. They recounted the events of their expedition again and again, the meeting with the two children, seeing the flock of sheep, and crossing the shaky bridge.

The consequence of this last account was that all expeditions to the Zillerbach were strictly forbidden for the future.

In the meantime little Karl had fallen fast asleep in his chair.

"See, Karl is resting after his day's work," said their father, "and it is high time for yours to be at an end."

It was not easy to waken the little sleeper, so the bailiff took him, chair and all, and carried him into the chamber, while the other children followed, laughing and shouting at the funny sight.

From that time, at every meal, morning, noon, and night, one after the other, the children would say:

"Oh, if we only had a lamb!"

One evening, when the mother and children were sitting around the table, and little Karl, who found the school-work of the others rather tiresome, had said for the sixth time: "Oh, if we only had a lamb!" the door opened suddenly and in sprang a real live lamb. The little creature was covered with snow-white curly wool and was prettier than any the children had ever seen.

Such a cry of joy, such a noise arose, that nobody could hear a word.

The lamb darted from one corner to another in fright, bleating pitifully, while the children rushed after him with shouts of joy.

At last their father called: "Come, that's enough. We must take the lamb to his new quarters, and then I have something to say to you."

The children went out to see where the lamb was put, full of wonder as to the place. A little addition had been made to the stable, and nice, clean straw lay on the floor for the lamb's bed. There was a little manger, too, in which to put grass and hay for him.

When the pretty creature had been carefully placed on his straw bed and was quiet, the father closed the low door and motioned to the children to follow him. When they had returned to the sitting-room, he said seriously:

" Now listen to me, and give heed to what I say. I have taken the lamb away from his mother to give to you. You must take the mother's place and care for him, so he will not die of home-sickness. You may take him out with you during your play-time wherever you wish; but you must never leave him alone, and whoever takes him out must take care of him and bring him back to his place. Do you understand, and are you willing to take care of him in this way? If not, I will take him back to his mother."

All three, Lisa, Kurt, and Karl, begged their father to leave the lamb with them, and promised faithfully to obey his commands in every respect, and were so full of joy at the prospect of having a real live lamb that they could not easily get to sleep that night. Even little Karl, usually so sleepy, sat up in bed and called out, again and again:

" Papa shall see that the lamb will not die here. I will take care of that."

CHAPTER III

The Effect of Concealment

The next day the great question was what the lamb's name should be.

Lisa proposed calling it "Eulalia", for that was the name of her friend's cat, and it seemed to her an especially fine name. But the boys did not like it. It was too long. Kurt proposed "Nero", as the big dog at the mill was called. But Lisa and Karl were not pleased with this name.

In despair, they went to their mother, who suggested he should be called "Curlyhead", and Curlyhead he was from that time forth.

The little creature soon became a great pet for the children. They took him out for a frolic whenever they had a few spare moments. Sometimes they went to the pasture, and Kurt and Karl would search for rich, juicy clover-leaves to bring him, while Lisa sat on a bank with the little creature's head in her lap.

Whenever a child was sent on an errand to the mill, or to the baker's, the lamb must go, and he listened so intelligently to all the conversation his companion addressed to him that it was evident he understood every word. He

grew every day more trustful, and thrived so well under this excellent care that he grew round as a ball, and his wool was as white and pretty as if he were always in his Sunday dress.

The beautiful, sunny autumn was drawing to an end, and November came. Christmas was coming, and every child's mind was filled with expectations of that joyful event. Kurt and Karl disclosed all their cherished dreams to Curlyhead, and assured him he should have his share of holiday presents. Curlyhead listened attentively and seemed to appreciate these confidences.

Lisa had a particular friend, Marie, who lived in the great farmhouse on the way to the Zillerbach. Lisa was very anxious to visit this friend, for she could talk over her prospects for Christmas more fully with her than with her brothers. She had permission to go on her first free afternoon, and, when the time came, she was so impatient to start that she could hardly hold still long enough for her mother to tie on her warm scarf. Then she ran bounding off, while her mother watched her until she was half-way down the hill; then she turned and went into the house again.

At that moment it came into Lisa's mind that Curlyhead would enliven the long way if her brothers had not already taken him. She quickly

turned around, ran back to the barn, and took out Curlyhead. Together they ran down the hard path where the bright autumn leaves were dancing about in the wind. They soon reached the end of their journey, where Lisa and her friend were quickly lost in deep conversation, walking up and down on the sunny plot of ground in front of the house, while Curlyhead nibbled contentedly at the hedge.

The two friends refreshed themselves occasionally with pears, and juicy red apples, which grew in great abundance on the farm.

Marie's mother had brought out a great basketful, and Lisa was to carry home what were left. When it was time for Lisa to go home, Marie accompanied her a little way, and they still had so much to say, that they were in sight of Lisa's home before they knew it. Marie quickly took leave of her, and Lisa hurried up the path. It was already dark. Just as she reached the house, the thought flashed through her mind like lightning: "Where is Curlyhead?"

She knew she had taken him with her. She had seen him nibbling the hedge, and then she had entirely forgotten him.

In a most dreadful fright she rushed back down the mountain again, calling: "Curlyhead, Curlyhead, where are you? Oh, come, come!"

But all was still. Curlyhead was nowhere to

be seen. Lisa ran back to the farmhouse. There was a light already in the window of the sitting-room, and she could look in from the stone steps by the house. They were all at the supper table; Father, Mother, Marie, and her brothers and the servants. The old cat lay on a bench by the stove; but nowhere was there a trace of Curlyhead to be seen, as Lisa peered into all the corners. Then she ran out of the house through the garden, round the outside of the hedge, again into the garden, and along the inside of the hedge, calling; "Curlyhead, come now, oh, come, come!"

All in vain. There was no sight or sound of the lamb. Lisa grew more anxious. It grew darker and the wind howled louder and louder, and almost blew her from the ground.

She must go home. What should she do? She did not dare to say she had lost Curlyhead. If she could see her mother alone first!

She ran as fast as she could up the mountain. At home supper was ready, and her father was already there. She burst into the room in such a heated, disordered condition that her mother said: "You cannot come to the table so, child; go and make yourself ready first." And her father added: "You must not come home so late! Now go, and come back in a neater condition, or you will have nothing to eat."

Lisa obeyed quietly. As far as supper was

concerned, it was all the same to her; she would much rather not come in at all; but that would not do. With a very sad face she returned to her place. She had a fearful anxiety in regard to the remarks and questions sure to follow. But before anyone could say anything to her, a new occurrence claimed the attention of the whole family.

Hans put his head in at the door and said: "Excuse me, sir, but Trina says the children are all at home and the lamb is not yet in the barn."

"What?" cried the bailiff. "What can this mean? Who has taken him out?"

"Not I!" "Not I! Certainly not I!" "Nor I," cried out Kurt and Karl so loudly that one could not hear whether Lisa spoke or not.

"Not so fast," said their mother gently. "It certainly was not Lisa. She went alone this afternoon to visit Marie, and has only just come back."

"Then it is one of you boys," cried their father hastily, looking sharply at the two brothers.

A great cry came as answer: "Not I!" "Not I!" and both of them looked so honest that the bailiff said at once: "No! No! It is not you; Hans must have left the door open an instant, and the lamb took the opportunity of running out. I must look into it."

He left the room hastily to make an examination of the barn.

When the first excitement was over another idea became uppermost. All at once Karl covered his eyes with his hands, and sobbed out:

"Now Curlyhead is lost. We shall never see him any more. Perhaps he is already dead."

And Kurt added, weeping aloud: "Yes, it grows colder, and he has nothing to eat and will surely freeze and die in misery."

Lisa began to cry more violently than her brothers. She said nothing, but one could easily see how much deeper her grief was than theirs, and Lisa herself knew why. Long after Kurt and Karl were asleep, dreaming happy dreams of Curlyhead, Lisa lay tossing uneasily, and could not sleep. Besides her grief for the lamb left to wander alone in the cold night, she had to bear the torture of the thought that she was the cause of this, and that she had concealed it when she ought to have confessed it. She had not, it is true, called out "Not I, not I"; but she had been silent when her mother said: "It certainly cannot be Lisa," and she rightly felt that by her silence she had done the same wrong as if she had told an untruth. She could not rest until she determined to tell her mother the whole story in the morning. Perhaps he would be found.

The next morning was bright and sunny, and at breakfast it was decided that, as soon as school was out, all three children should go out to look for Curlyhead. In the afternoon they would do the same. He must be somewhere, and they would find him. Their mother told them, too, that their father had already, in the early morning, sent Hans out to search for the little creature everywhere; so there was every hope that he would be found. Lisa was most happy at this prospect, and thought she would not need to say anything now; everything would come right. The whole Rechberg was searched during the day, and inquiries made in every house; but Curlyhead seemed to have disappeared from the face of the earth. Nobody had seen him, and nowhere was there any trace of him. The search was continued for several days; but in vain. Then the bailiff said it was of no use: either the poor animal was no longer alive, or it had wandered far away.

A few days after, the first snow fell, and so thick and large were the flakes that in a short time the whole garden lay in deep snow, which came half-way up the hedge. Generally, the children rejoiced greatly in the first snow; and the more the flakes whirled about, the more they shouted and exulted.

Now they were quiet, and one looked here,

and one there, at the window, and each one thought in silence of Curlyhead, wondering if he lay under the cold snow or was trying to wade through it and could not, and was calling for help with his well-known voice, and no one was near to hear. When their father came home at night, he said: "It is a bitterly cold night; the snow is already frozen hard. If the poor animal is not already dead, it will certainly perish tonight. Would that I had never brought the poor creature home!" Then Karl broke out in such bitter weeping, and Kurt and Lisa joined in such a heartrending manner, that their father left the room, and their mother sought to comfort them.

From that time the bailiff never mentioned the lamb again, and when the children grieved for it, their mother talked to them about the Christmas celebration. She told them that the Christ-child came to make all hearts glad, and that this festival, which would soon come, would make them happy again. And when tender-hearted Karl began, as the cold, dark evenings came on, to say despondingly: "Oh, if only Curlyhead were not freezing in the cold outside!" Then his mother comforted him by saying: "See, Karl, the good God takes care of animals too. It may be that he has prepared a warm bed for Curlyhead elsewhere, and it is well with him; and since we can care no more for him, let us be

content and leave him with the good God." Kurt listened attentively as their mother comforted Karl, and so it happened that, gradually, the two brothers became happy again, and rejoiced more every day in the prospect of the pleasant Christmas time. But Lisa did not grow cheerful with them. A heavy burden lay upon her, which crushed her down and kept her always unhappy. At night she dreamed of seeing Curlyhead lying out in the snow, hungry and freezing, looking at her with reproachful eyes which said, " You have done it." Then she would wake up weeping, and afterwards, when she tried to be merry with her brothers, she could not, for she always kept thinking, if they knew what she had done, how they would reproach her! She dared not look straight in the eyes of her parents, for she had concealed from them what she ought to have revealed, and now she could not bring the words to her lips; she had let them believe so long that she knew nothing about the affair.

So Lisa had no more happy minutes, and every day she appeared more mournful and full of grief; and when Kurt and Karl came to her and said: " Do be happy, Lisa; Christmas is coming, and only think of what may happen," then the tears came to her eyes, and, half weeping, she said, " I can never be happy, no, never, not even at Christmas."

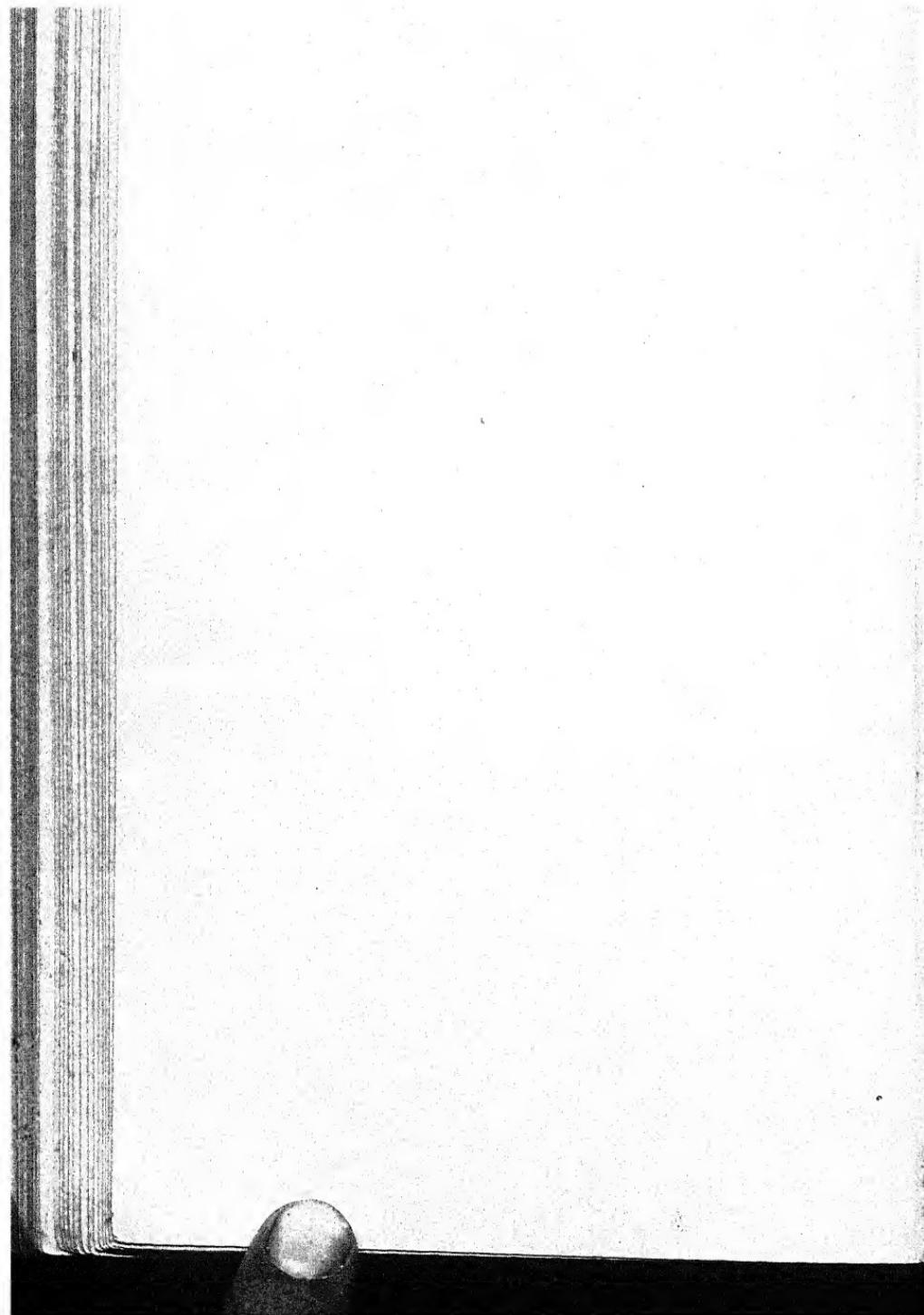


D 383

STANZELI LOOKED IN ASTONISHMENT AT THE LITTLE ANIMAL

Norman
Sutcliffe

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That grieved tender-hearted Karl, and he said comfortingly: "Do you know, Lisa, when we can do nothing more, then we must leave all to God, and then we are happy again if we have done nothing wrong? Mamma said so." Lisa then began to cry in earnest, so that it alarmed Karl, and he ran away, as Kurt had already done. Lisa's altered demeanour had not escaped her mother's notice. She often watched the child in silence, but asked her no questions.

CHAPTER IV

A Gift

November came to an end. The snow had become deeper, and every day the cold grew more bitter. Stanzeli's grandmother in Altkirch moved her thin coverlet here and there, and could hardly keep warm under it. The room was cold, too, for their supply of wood was very scanty, and with the deep snow there were no sticks to be found. Coffee was very rarely made, and it had to be ground with stones, as the mill was useless, and there was no money for a new one. The poor grandmother had many things to complain of. Her husband sat, most of the

time, by the stove, seeking to soothe her, and weaving at the same time his little willow baskets.

It had snowed for so long, and the deep snow was so soft, that the old man had been obliged to take his baskets to the dairyman himself, for the children would have been buried. But at last the sky was clear, and the high fields of snow, far and wide, were frozen so hard that one could go over them as over a firm street; the ice did not crack under the heaviest man.

Now the children could be sent out again. Stanzeli wound a shawl about her, Seppli put on his woollen cap, and they started out. When they came to the stream, Stanzeli laid her baskets down, and taking Seppli by the hand, entered the quiet chapel. She was saying her prayer softly and thoughtfully, when all at once a peculiar cry sounded through the stillness. Stanzeli was a little frightened, and turned to Seppli, saying softly: "Don't do so in the chapel; you must be still." Seppli replied just as softly, but indignantly: "I don't do it; it is you."

At that moment the cry sounded again, and louder. Seppli looked carefully at a place in the rear of the church, and suddenly touching Stanzeli's arm, drew her so forcibly from her seat towards the altar, that she could do nothing but follow. Here, at the foot of the altar, half covered by the altar cloth under which it

crouched, lay a white lamb, trembling and shaking with the cold, and stretching out its thin legs as if it could move no more from weariness.

"It is a lamb; now we have something given to us that we can see," cried Seppli in delight.

Stanzeli looked in great astonishment at the little animal. Father Clemens's words had come into her mind also, and she believed nothing else than that God had sent the lamb to them.

"We will take him home with us and give him a potato," said Seppli, who knew no other cause of misery than hunger.

"What are you thinking of, Seppli? We must go to the dairyman's," said faithful Stanzeli; "but we cannot leave the little thing here alone," and the child looked thoughtfully at the poor creature with its troubled breathing.

"I know, now," she continued, after some reflection. "You take care of the lamb, here, and I will run up with the baskets as fast as I can, and come back for you."

Seppli was pleased with his sister's idea, and Stanzeli ran on immediately. She darted over the fields of snow as nimbly as a deer. Seppli seated himself on the floor and looked at his present. The lamb was covered with such beautiful thick wool, that he took great pleasure in burying his hand in it, and it became at once so beautifully warm that he quickly thrust in

the other also. He drew very near to the little creature, and it was like a small stove for him; for although it trembled with the cold itself, yet its woolly covering afforded an excellent means of warmth to Seppli. In less than half an hour Stanzeli came back, and now they wished to take their gift home to their grandparents. But in vain did they try to place the lamb on its feet; it was so feeble that it fell down at once with a mournful cry, when they had raised it a little.

"It must be carried," said Stanzeli; "but it is too heavy for me, you must help me;" and she showed Seppli how he must take hold so as not to hurt the lamb, and they carried it away together. Their progress was a little slow, for it was quite difficult for the two to go far with their load; but they were so delighted that they did not give up until they reached their cottage, and could rush in with their new-found treasure.

"We have a sheep; a live sheep with very warm wool," cried Seppli, as he entered; and when they were inside the room, they laid the lamb on the seat near the stove, by their astonished grandfather. Then Stanzeli told how everything had happened, and how it had come exactly as Father Clemens had said: that God sends something whenever one prays, only it cannot always be seen at once.

"But to-day we can see it," interposed Seppli joyfully.

Joseph looked at his wife to see what she thought, and she looked at him, saying: "You must tell them, Joseph."

After some reflection he said: "Somebody must go up to Father Clemens, and ask him how we are to understand that. I will go myself." With that he rose from his seat, put on his old fur cap, and went out.

Father Clemens came back with him.

When he had greeted the invalid, he sat down and looked carefully at the poor, exhausted lamb. Then he drew the children to him and said kindly: "This is how it is: when we pray, God gives us cheerful and courageous hearts, and that is a beautiful gift on which many others depend. This lamb is lost; it must belong to the large flock which passed through late in the autumn, and the shepherd will certainly inquire for it. It must have been lost a long time, for it is nearly starved and almost dead; perhaps we cannot bring it back to life. First it must have a little warm milk, and then we can see what more it can take."

With the last words the good Father had lifted the lamb a little and laid his hand tenderly under its head.

Joseph said faintly: "We will do what we can.

Stanzeli, go and see if there is a drop of milk."

But Father Clemens prevented Stanzeli from going and said: "I do not mean that; if it is agreeable to you, I will take the lamb. I have room and can take care of it."

That was a great relief to the old people, for they did not wish to leave the lamb to die of hunger, and where there was anything to feed it they did not know.

So Father Clemens took the tired animal on his arm, and went with it to the old cloister. For a long time Seppli looked after him and grumbled a little.

A few days after, the grandfather saw Father Clemens coming again to their house, and said to the grandmother, in astonishment: "What does it mean; why is the good Father coming so soon again?"

"The lamb is probably dead, and he wishes to tell us, so that we may not expect in vain a reward from the shepherd for finding it."

Father Clemens entered; one could see that he had no pleasant message to bring. Stanzeli and Seppli sprang quickly towards him to offer him their hands.

He caressed them kindly, then said in a low tone to the grandfather: "It would be well to send the children away for a while; I have something to say to you."

The grandfather became a little uneasy, and thought to himself: "If I could only put mother out of the way, so that she would not hear if there is anything disagreeable to be related."

He gave Stanzeli the tin can and said: "Go with Seppli and get the milk, and if it is a little too early you can wait at the farm; it is warm in the cow-shed."

When the children were gone, Father Clemens moved his chair nearer to the bed and said: "Come a little nearer, Joseph; I must disclose something to you. I do it unwillingly, however. Sepp has disgraced himself somewhat."

Hardly were these words spoken when the grandmother raised a fearful lamentation, and cried again and again: "Oh, my God, that I must pass through this! It was my last hope that Sepp would sometime reform and come home and help us in our last days, and now all that is past. Perhaps we must bear a great shame, and we have kept ourselves honourable and honest to a good old age. How willingly I would lie on my hard bed without complaining, and with never a good taste of coffee, if only this were not true! Oh, if he had not brought us to misfortune and shame!"

The old man sat affrighted and thunderstruck. "What has he done, Father?" he asked, hesitatingly; "is it a wicked deed?"

Father Clemens answered that he did not know at all what it was; he had only understood that Sepp had done something over on the other side of the Zillerbach, for which he must answer to the bailiff on the Rechberg, who would certainly have him imprisoned.

"Alas, has he done it over there?" broke out the grandmother anew. "Ah, how will it go with him? They will certainly punish him severely enough, because he is of another faith."

"No, no, you must not take it so, grandmother," said Father Clemens deprecatingly; "it is not so. The bailiff is not unjust, and he is right-minded as far as belief is concerned. I have heard him say more than once: 'A virtuous and God-fearing man on this side of the Zillerbach, and such a one on the other side, both pray to the same Father in Heaven, and the prayer of one is just as precious to Him as the prayer of the other!' I have known the bailiff for many years, and I can tell you that I have had edifying conversations with him and his wife hundreds of times, and we have understood each other so well that it has done us good, and I feel a real inclination to go again when I have not been there for a long time. I have it now in my mind to go there soon to see how it stands with Sepp, and to speak a good word for him to the bailiff."

The old people were very glad and grateful for this proposal. But her distress prompted the grandmother to say once more, complainingly: "If I only did not have to blame myself! I have brought this on us because I have lamented and complained so much over our narrow means. I will do it no more, I will be patient. Do you think our Father in Heaven will accept my repentance, and not punish me so severely?"

Father Clemens comforted her, and advised her to keep her good resolution.

Then he arose and promised her to come again as soon as he had been to the Rechberg, to bring news of Sepp.

Joseph accompanied the priest outside the house, and then asked: "How is the lamb? Is it still living, or has it perished?"

"No signs of perishing," answered Father Clemens cheerfully, "it is round and fat and plays merrily again, and it is such a trustful little creature that I shall be sorry to give it up when the shepherd comes. I have sent him word that the lamb is with me, so he will probably leave it until he comes to this region again; and now, God be with you."

He shook Joseph's hand and went quickly away, for he had other sick ones to comfort who waited longingly for him; for in all Altkirch and

far beyond, Father Clemens was the comforter of the poor and sick.

CHAPTER V

Christmas Evening

The long-desired Christmas Day had come at last. Kurt and Karl had been in a fever of expectation all day, and wandered restlessly from one room to another, unable to keep still anywhere. They had the feeling that they might bring the evening more quickly by constant motion.

Lisa sat quietly in a corner, and gave no attention to what her brothers were saying. She had never known such a Christmas. A heavy burden lay upon her, which stifled every feeling of joy. When she tried to force herself to throw off this weight and to be merry with her brothers, she found it impossible. She fancied all the time she heard someone coming who had found Curlyhead dead, and who would tell her father that it was she who had forgotten and left him.

Towards evening Kurt and Karl found a moment's rest, and sat together in a state of

listening expectation, talking in subdued whispers.

"What should you think of a croquet game with coloured balls?" whispered Karl. "Do you suppose the Christ-child thinks of that?"

"Perhaps," answered Kurt; "but do you know, I would much rather have a new sled; for you see *Kessler* does not run well, and we have only *Geiss* besides. When Lisa feels like playing again, she will want to coast, and then she will have *Geiss* and there is not room for us both on *Kessler*."

"Yes. But then there are the soldiers. Don't you know how many thousand times we have wished for a set of soldiers?" said Karl. "I would almost rather go without the sled than the soldiers."

"Perhaps," said Kurt slowly, for a new thought had already come to him.

"But suppose the Christ-child should bring a paint-box, then we could paint those pictures of soldiers, and make our own."

"Oh! Oh!" ejaculated Karl, quite taken by the charming prospect.

Just then their mother entered the room, and said: "Children, the candles are lit on the piano and we will go and sing. Where is Lisa?"

In the twilight, she had not noticed that Lisa was sitting in the corner of the room; neither

had her brothers known she was there. She came out now and went to the piano with the others. Her mother seated herself and played for them to sing. Kurt and Karl sang lustily and Lisa joined in softly.

When they came to the words in the song: *Jesus is greater, Jesus is greater, He who rejoices our sad hearts,* Karl sang them so joyfully and loudly that one could see he did not have a sad heart. But Lisa had known what it was to have a sad heart; she swallowed a lump in her throat, and could not sing any more.

When the song was ended, their mother rose and said: "Now stay here quietly until I come again." But Lisa ran after her and said mournfully:

"Mamma! Mamma! may I ask you something?"

The mother drew the child into her bedroom and asked her what she wanted.

"Mamma, can Jesus make all sad hearts happy again?" asked Lisa anxiously. "Yes, child, all," answered the mother, "all, whatever burdens them. Only one He cannot make happy, and that is one which holds a wrong and will not lay it aside."

Lisa broke out into loud crying. "I will hold it no longer," she sobbed. "I will tell it. I took Curlyhead away with me and forgot him, and

lost him, and then I was silent, and I am the cause of his starving and freezing, and I cannot rejoice any more, not over anything."

Her mother drew Lisa lovingly to her, and said comfortingly:

"Now you have experienced, my child, how a wrong deed hidden in our hearts can make us terribly unhappy. You will think of it, and never wish to do it again. But now you have confessed it repentantly; and the holy Christ can and will come into your heart, and make it happy again, for to-day He wishes especially to make all hearts glad. Now dry your tears and go to your brothers. I will come soon."

Such a weight had been taken from Lisa's heart, and she felt all at once so light and free, that she could almost have jumped over all the mountains.

Suddenly the thought came to her—to-day is Christmas! Anything may happen to-day! Everything within her rejoiced. There was only one shadow—Curlyhead! Where was he now?

As she went skipping towards her brothers, Karl said gladly: "I knew Lisa would be merry again at Christmas."

While Lisa was talking very fast about what she expected and hoped for, the house-bell sounded, loud and long, and Karl, pale with excitement, cried: "The Christ-child!"

At that moment their mother opened the door, and a flood of light streamed in from the next room. The children rushed in. There was such a blaze and sparkle and splendour that at first they could distinguish nothing.

Ah! Yes; in the middle of the room was a great pine tree, gleaming with candles from top to bottom, covered with beautiful angels, brilliant birds, red strawberries and cherries, and golden apples and pears.

The children ran around the tree in speechless admiration. Suddenly, something came running in which almost knocked Lisa down. She uttered a shout of joy. Surely—it was—Curlyhead!

Round as a ball, and pretty as ever, he came and rubbed his head good-naturedly against Lisa's dress, bleating for joy. Kurt and Karl could hardly believe their eyes. Not hungry, not cold—alive and well! it was really Curlyhead. They almost smothered him in their joy. But Karl had seen something else. He made a dive towards the table.

"Kurt! Kurt!" he cried, almost beside himself, "the soldiers! the soldiers!"

But Kurt had already darted to the other side and called back: "Come here! Here is the new sled, a splendid sled!"

As Karl ran towards him he cried again:

"Oh, here is the paint-box! Only see how many brushes."

Lisa still hugged Curlyhead. He was her best present. Now she could be perfectly happy again. Everything was right.

Suddenly she saw two great eyes staring in wonder at the splendid tree. They belonged to Seppli, and there was Stanzeli standing near him.

Lisa went to the children.

"So you have come at last to see me?" she said. "Isn't the tree beautiful?"

"Oh," said Stanzeli shyly. "Your mother brought us here. Father Clemens told us today that the lamb belonged to you, and that we might bring it over."

"And you brought Curlyhead? Where from? Where did you find it? How can he look so fat and well?"

"You will know all that some other time, Lisa," said her mother, coming towards the children. "Now you must lead your little friends to their Christmas table by the window."

At first, nothing could induce Seppli to move from the wonderful tree. Such a gleaming, splendid thing he had never seen in all his life. He could not take his eyes off it.

At last Lisa said: "Do come, Seppli. You can see the tree just as well by the table, and

then you can find if there is something for you."

Seppli moved slowly away, without taking his eyes from the tree. But when he looked at the table there was another pleasant sight. In the centre was the very largest cake he had ever seen, flanked by apples and nuts. Near by was a school-bag, with books, a slate, and pencils. There was a thick warm jacket, such as he never had in his life. When Lisa said: "These are Seppli's," he stood, as if glued to the spot, and could hardly believe it.

He looked first at Stanzeli, and then at his treasure, but Stanzeli was busy with her own presents, a beautiful new dress, and a handsome work-box.

She was much frightened when the bailiff came straight towards her, with a strange man who had been standing in the door with Hans and Trina.

"You would hardly know them now," said the bailiff, turning away again.

The man put out his hand.

"Give me your hand, Stanzeli," he said. The child obeyed, looking at him doubtfully.

"Stanzeli, Stanzeli," cried the stranger, much moved, "don't look at me so. I am your father; do say one word to me. Your eyes are so like your mother's," and he wiped his eyes as he spoke.

"We have nobody but grandfather and grandmother," said Seppli decidedly, who had heard everything.

"No, Seppli. You have a father, too, and I am he," said the man, taking each of the children by the hand. "You must learn to know me, Stanzeli. You will be kind to your father, will you not? You have grown just like your mother," and the man wiped his eyes again.

"Yes, I will, indeed," said Stanzeli. "But I do not know you."

The bailiff, who had been watching them, now came nearer. "Sepp," he said gravely, "I know another father and mother whom it grieves that their child does not know them, and has no grateful service for them. But it is Christmas to-day, and we must all be merry. Go and harness Brownie into the sleigh now, and drive your children home. I leave the rest to you."

"May God reward you a thousandfold," said Sepp gratefully. "You shall be satisfied with me, as surely as I wish God to have mercy on my poor soul."

"Right. Now be off, Sepp. This goes in the sleigh," said the bailiff, pointing to a large roll near the children's table. Sepp took it on his shoulders and went off.

The children's presents were soon packed up,

and they took their leave, promising to come again on the first fine Sunday.

Then Trina put the children in the sleigh, and Lisa's mother called to her:

"Wrap them up well in the robe, Trina, so that they will not be cold."

Then the merry-making went on inside, around the Christmas-tree, where all the presents were admired, and Curlyhead most of all.

Just as the little party were leaving Rechberg, Father Clemens was walking along the moonlit path by the old foot-bridge, smiling, as he thought of the visit he had made ten days before, at Rechberg, when he had learned the truth in regard to Sepp.

The facts of the case were: Sepp had run away from a hard master, and as the master was a rich farmer of some importance, he did not like to lose a servant for such a reason, so he had complained of Sepp, and put the affair in the hands of the bailiff.

The bailiff had defended Sepp, and told him he had done perfectly right.

Then Father Clemens appeared, and told the bailiff about Sepp's parents and the two children, and how Sepp had been affected by the loss of his wife.

"He is not a bad fellow," the good man said.

"If you will give him a little advice, it may make a good impression on him."

The bailiff promised to do so, and his wife asked further concerning the old people and the children. One thing followed another until the priest told about the lamb which the children had found; and finally, it came out that it was their Curlyhead. The bailiff and his wife were overjoyed, and charged Father Clemens to bring the children over on Christmas evening, to share in the festival.

That was a great joy to the good priest. He said nothing about the tree, to either the old people or the children; and he smiled again as he thought of their surprise. Now he was going to Joseph's house, that he might see their happy faces on their return.

When he entered the sitting-room, the invalid called out: "I am glad you have come to give us a word of comfort. It is dark already, and the children have to cross the Zillerbach. God forbid that anything should happen to them."

"No, no, Grandmother," said the priest cheerfully. "Don't let us complain to-day. There is joy everywhere to-day; and Christ is watching, especially over all children. Nothing will happen to them. Now let us have a good talk together."

Meantime Brownie was flying over the snow,

for Sepp felt such a desire to get home again, that he could not go fast enough. He had not been there for six years; and at times, when the thought of home had arisen, he had felt a great heaviness and emptiness, such as he had experienced when Constance died. To get rid of these thoughts Sepp had run still farther away.

But to-day, since he had seen the children, everything seemed different to him; and Stanzeli had brought her mother so vividly before his eyes, and all the peaceful days which he had passed with her and his parents in the home by the willow, that he thought he could not hold out until he should see the house, and father and mother, again. Now the sleigh stopped by the willows. Sepp took the children out, and threw the thick robe over Brownie; then he took the children, one on each side, and entered the room.

He was so overcome that he ran sobbing to the bed, and called out: "Mother! Father! Do not be angry with me, but forgive me. I will certainly do what I can, that you may see better days. I know well that you must have had a hard time; but, God willing, it will be better from this day."

The old people wept for joy, and his mother kept saying: "Ah! Sepp, Sepp, is it indeed possible? I would never have believed that

God could so change your heart. I will give praise and thanks as long as there is any breath in me." And his father gave his hand, and said: "It is well, Sepp. All shall be forgiven and forgotten, and you are welcome! But, tell us now how you came with the children, and how things are with you."

First, Sepp had to press the hand of Father Clemens, who had heard all with a satisfied smile. Then the parents learned, to their astonishment, that the bailiff had employed Sepp as a servant, and had already trusted him with his horse and sleigh. At New Year, Hans and Trina wished to settle for themselves, so there was a servant's place to fill; and Sepp added delightedly: "And what a place! Such a good master, who talks to me like a father, and good pay besides, and many an article of clothing through the year—that I know from Hans. I have begged the bailiff, however, not to give me any of my pay, that I may not misspend it; and, at the end of the month, you will get it all. I have nothing to bring now but goodwill."

"Which is worth everything; and may our Heavenly Father add his blessing to it," said Father Clemens.

Seppli, in the meantime, had been wandering up and down, looking for a place to deposit his many treasures. When he saw his opportunity,

he crowded up to his grandmother's bed and quickly covered over half of it with his presents; when Stanzeli saw him, she came, too, and covered the other half with hers. It looked like a table at a fair, and the poor woman could only clasp her hands and say: "Is it possible?" But when Sepp brought in the big bundle, and unrolled several beautiful, warm blankets, she was dumb with surprise and gratitude.

Joseph picked up something which rolled out of the blankets, and his eyes shone for joy, for now his only wish was fulfilled. It was a new coffee-mill. Such a joyful Christmas had never been known in the little house by the willows. Sepp held his children as if he could not let them go; and when they saw how their grandparents loved him, they were willing to love him too.

At last Sepp had to go back to Rechberg; but the bailiff had promised him that he should come every Sunday afternoon to visit his family, so the separation was not to be a long one.

As he was about to drive away, Seppli called after him: "Father, wait. I must tell you something."

When his father bent down to him he whispered impressively: "Father, when you pass by the chapel, do not forget to go in and pray. God always gives you something, you know; you

cannot always see it at the time, but it is sure to come."

Seppli had connected all the joys of the day with the lamb, which he believed God had sent to them in the chapel, in answer to their prayers.

Sepp has proved a trusty and valuable servant at Rechberg. Every Sunday he comes home to Altkirch, bringing a loaf of fresh, white bread for supper.

The delicacies sent by the bailiff's wife, together with the coffee from the new mill, have given new strength to the grandmother, so that she is able to be about the house again, and the little cottage under the willow is so neat and cheerful that Sepp often says to himself, during the week: "Well, home is the best place."

Stanzeli and Seppli often go to play with Lisa, and her brothers, and Curlyhead.

And Lisa, whenever she looks at Curlyhead, thinks: "How happy I am! I will never again conceal a wrong deed in my heart."

BASTI'S SONG IN ALTORF

The green fields of Burgeln are very gay in summer, with fragrant grasses and bright flowers.

The little village is surrounded by shady nut trees, and a busy brook rushes past them, leaping over the stones in its way.

A foot-path leads along by the brook to an old ivy-covered tower at the end of the village. A very large walnut tree stands here, in whose shade the traveller pauses to rest and look up to the high cliffs above, which seem to touch the blue sky.

On the other side of the stream a narrow path goes up the steep mountain-side. Near the bridge stands a little house with a small barn; higher up is another, and still another, and then, near the top, is the smallest house of all. The door is so low that a man has to stoop to get in, and the shed for the goat is so small that when

the goat goes in, there is room for nothing else. The house has only two rooms, and in the summer time the door is left open to let in the light; otherwise, it is quite dark. At the time of our story, a poor woman lived in this house, with two children, Basti and Franzeli. When the little boy was born, his father looked in the calendar, and found it was St. Sebastian's day; so the child was named Sebastian, which was shortened to Basti. The little girl came on St. Francis's day, and was called Franzeli.

Afra, the mother, was a most diligent, hard-working woman, and after the death of her husband, she still kept her children so tidy that no one would have guessed that they belonged to the poorest woman in the whole district. Clean clothes were always ready for them on Sunday, and warm stockings were knitted for winter. In summer they wore neither shoes nor stockings.

When these two children came down the mountain hand-in-hand, one man would often say to another:

"I wonder what Afra does to her children. Mine never look so tidy."

And his neighbour would answer: "Just what I was thinking. I will ask my wife how it is done."

So five years passed away. Basti was now

six years old, and Franzeli five; but she was so small and delicate that she looked fully two years younger than her brother.

It had been a cold autumn. Winter set in early, and promised to be a severe one. Snow fell in October, and, in November, Afra's cottage was buried so deep that she could hardly get outside. The children sat in the corner by the stove and never went to the door. Afra went out only when there was not a mouthful of food left in the house. The snow was so deep it was almost impossible for her to get down the mountain, and there was nobody to make a path, except one man who lived above, in whose footprints she tried to step. When she came back she was so weary that she would almost fall down by the way.

But it was not weariness alone which made her sigh when she reached home and sat down to mend her children's clothes. A great anxiety weighed her down, and grew with every day. Often she did not know where the next piece of bread was to come from. She got little work; and for a week at a time she would earn nothing. So she could buy no bread, and the goat's milk would not feed three people. For hours in the night, Afra would lie awake, trying to think how she could earn a little money for the three long winter months before her. She did not sing

any more when she put the children to bed; but sat still with her work.

One evening, when the wind was howling outside and shaking the house as if it would overthrow it, Basti's eyes were still wide open; and he lay watching his mother. Suddenly he said: "Why don't you sing any more, Mamma?"

"My child," she sighed, "I cannot."

"Have you forgotten the song? I will show you how it goes;" and the child sat up in bed and began to sing:

"Now the night is coming on;
Darkness everywhere.
Father, keep Thy children still
In Thy tender care."

Basti sang the hymn, which he had heard his mother sing so often, with a firm clear voice.

Suddenly a thought came to the poor woman. "Basti, you can help me earn something to buy bread," she said. "Would you like to do it?"

"Yes, yes, I will. Now?" asked the child eagerly, springing out of bed.

"No, no, get into bed again; see, how cold you are! To-morrow I will teach you a song, which you can sing on New Year's Day, which will soon be here. Then people will give you bread, and perhaps some nuts."

Basti became so excited at the prospect that he could not sleep, and called out again and again: "Is it morning yet?"

At last he closed his eyes; but in the morning he woke with the same idea uppermost.

He had to wait till evening, however, for his mother said: "I cannot sing during the day; I have too much to do."

When it was dark at last, Afra lighted a lamp, and seated herself at the table with a child on each side; then she took up her knitting, and said: "Listen, Basti; I will sing the first verse a few times, and then you can try it."

Very soon Basti was able to join in, and suddenly Franzeli began to sing too.

"That is right, Franzeli," said her mother. "Perhaps you will learn it, too."

When they had sung it together many times the mother said: "Now try it alone, Basti. And will Franzeli help, too?"

The little girl nodded, and began to sing in so clear and silvery a voice that her mother was astonished; and when Basti lost the air, Franzeli sang on like a bird who knows his melody from beginning to end. It was so sweet that the poor woman thought she could listen forever.

They practised the song every night, and by the end of the week they knew it perfectly. The last day of December had come, and for

the last time the children sang the carol to their mother.

These were the words:

A NEW YEAR'S SONG

The old year is departing,
A glad new year draws nigh;
Oh, may it bring thee blessings,
And songs for every sigh.

Cold winter sternly reigneth;
The earth with ice is bound;
Yet God is ever working
Where'er His own are found.

Yet many a little birdling
For food may hunt in vain;
And children, too, will hunger
Before the winter's wane.

Now, to all, late or early,
Much good this year may bring;
God's friends ne'er lack a blessing—
He helps in everything.

New Year's Day came. Afra went to church early, and then she began to wrap up the children in their warmest things, which were not any too warm.

She wound an old shawl round and round little Franzeli, took the child on her arm, and said: "Now we can go."

Basti went ahead, and struggled manfully through the deep snow until he came to the path by the brook, where he could go beside his mother.

He had so many questions to ask and the time passed so quickly, that they reached Altorf before they knew it.

A large number of children were out already singing New Year carols. Afra went directly to the great inn which stood near the old tower. No singers had yet been here.

She put Franzeli down and sent the children into the house, while she stood back by the tower, where she could watch them.

Hand in hand they went inside and began to sing.

The door of the guest room was opened and some people called the children in, and praised them for their singing, and many a bit of bread and now and then a small coin was put into their basket. The landlady dropped in a handful of nuts, saying: "At New Year's time you must have something to eat with your bread."

The children thanked them all and ran joyfully out to their mother.

They went on to other houses; but so many different bands of children were trying to sing at once, that often a man or woman would come out of the house and say they would rather give

every one of them a loaf of bread than hear such a noise. Sometimes they had to go away empty-handed.

At more than one place the mistress of the house came out and called Franzeli and said kindly: "Come, little one, you are nearly frozen. Take this and then go home."

It was so bitterly cold that Afra herself was almost numb, and Franzeli was shivering so she could scarcely sing. Basti could no longer hold the basket in his hands, they were so stiff; but was obliged to hang it on his arm.

Their mother saw they could endure it no longer, so she took Franzeli again in her arms.

"And you, Basti," she said, "run fast and you will get warm."

When they were at home again, they all sat by the fire to warm their hands and feet, and Basti brought out the basket to see what was in it.

Their mother said the little coins would buy food for many days, and she gave them some bread and nuts, and they had a merry New Year's Day.

Many sad anxious days followed, it is true; but at last the long winter was at an end, the warm sun appeared, and the children could go out again.

Poor Afra was no longer obliged to go out and search for wood to warm the little house;

but she had worked so hard during the winter, and suffered so many privations, that she had used up all her strength and could not regain it.

She still struggled on, however, in order that the town authorities might not separate her from her children.

Now the long summer days had come. The sun cast a red glow over all the mountain-sides where the late hay was spread out to dry.

Afra had gone up with her children to the top of the cliffs, where there was a little spot of land, from which she got hay to feed her goat in the winter. She had cut the grass some days before, and now she bound it up in a great bundle and carried it home on her shoulders.

Little Franzeli held on to her dress, and Basti with his little bundle of hay walked by her side.

They had eaten nothing since morning, except a small bit of bread, and it was now five o'clock.

When Afra took the rest of the loaf out of the cupboard, she was frightened to see how small it was, and she could get no money until the stockings she was knitting were done.

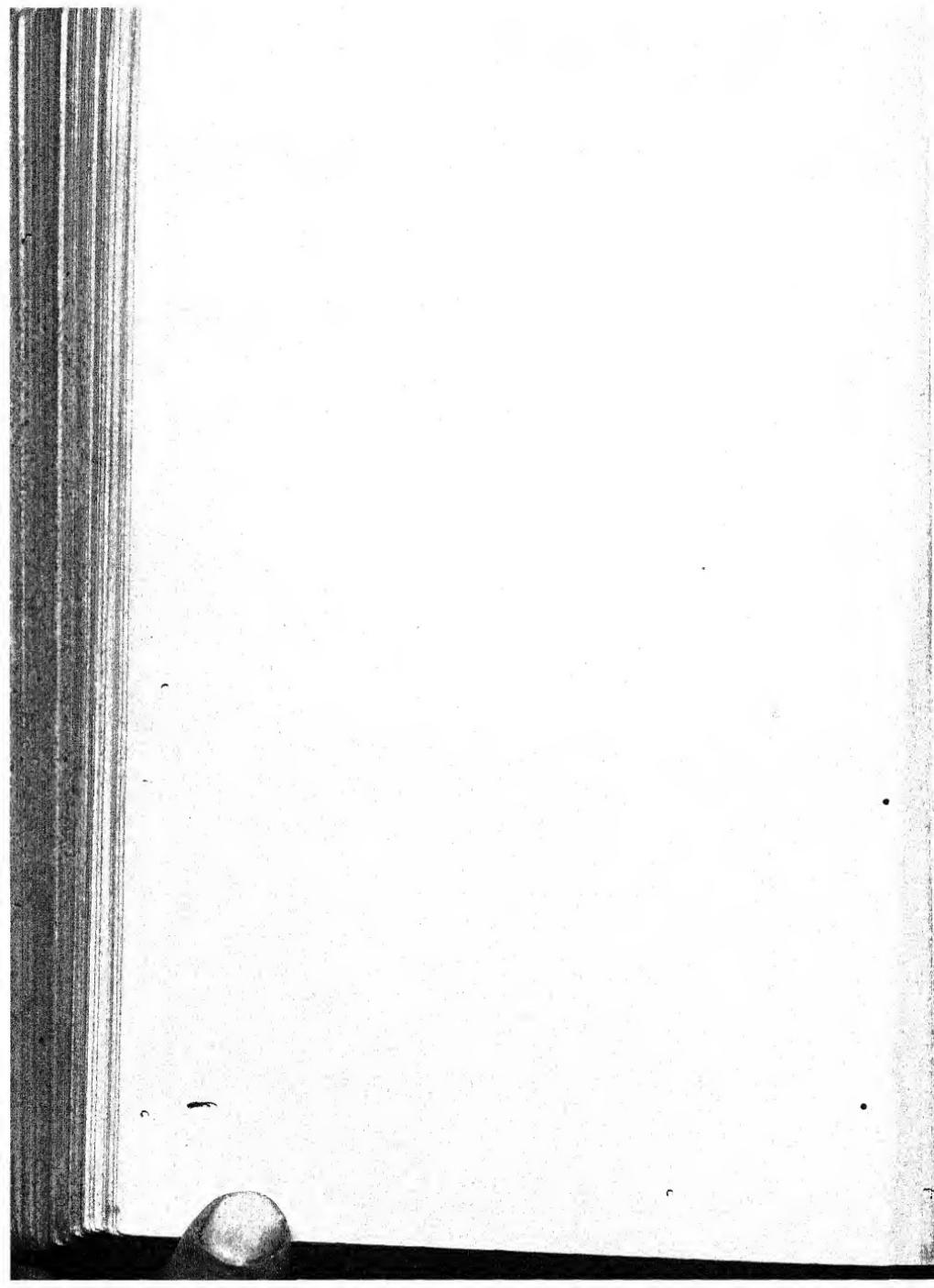
She gave half of the bread to Franzeli and half to Basti, saying: "I know you are very hungry; but you must understand there is more when this is gone. I will knit fast this evening and we will soon have more."



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"TAKE THIS AND THEN GO HOME"

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Basti took his piece: but before he bit into it, he looked at his mother, who poured some milk into a little cup for them, and then sat down and laid her head in her hands.

Basti watched her closely.

"Where is your piece?" he asked at last.

"I am not hungry; I do not want anything," replied his mother.

Franzeli came and put a bit of bread into her mouth, but she said: "No, no; eat it yourself; I cannot eat. If I could only go to the doctor in Altorf to-morrow he might help me."

She uttered the last words in a low tone, and suddenly sank back in her chair with closed eyes.

Basti looked at her awhile, and then said, softly: "Come, sister, I know what I will do. But we must be quiet and not wake Mamma; she wants to sleep, don't you see?"

The two children went out softly, and started down the mountain-side together. As they went along Basti explained: "You see, Franzeli, we are going to Altorf to sing our song again, and we shall get some bread and perhaps some nuts, and we will bring it all to Mamma. But can you sing the song still?"

She said she could still sing it, and she was so delighted at the prospect that she walked merrily through the meadows and along the stony street in spite of her bare feet.

They sang as they went, until they found themselves in Altorf. Then they stopped singing, and Basti said: "I know where we must sing first; it is not here."

He went on to the inn, "The Golden Eagle", where their mother had sent them on New Year's Day. But how different it was now! The afternoon sun sent golden beams across the open square in front of the door, and a great noise came from within.

A party of strangers had recently arrived; they were young men in gay-coloured caps. They had ordered the great table to be carried out into the garden, and there they were sitting eating and drinking in great merriment, for they had had a long tramp that day, and were now bent on having a good time.

When Franzeli saw all these young men at the table she stood still in fright; and Basti thought it best to sing at a safe distance. So he began with all his might, in order to be heard above the din.

"Quiet!" suddenly thundered the voice of the large, powerful man who sat at the head of the table. "Quiet! I say; I hear singing. We are having a serenade."

The young men looked around, and when they saw the children, who had placed themselves a little behind the old tower, they beck-

oned, and called to them: "Come here, come here."

The little ones had stopped singing, and Basti came forward willingly, but he had to drag Franzeli, who was in great terror.

The young man at the head of the table stretched out his long arm and drew Basti nearer, and all the others cried: "Now the song. Barba, let them sing."

"Yes," said the tall man, "your song. Out with it."

Basti sang lustily, and Franzeli's voice chimed in like a silver bell.

"The old year is departing;
The glad new year draws nigh;
Oh, may it bring thee blessings,
And songs for every sigh."

"Dear me! We must have got to the other side of the globe; they are celebrating New Year's Day here," cried Barba loudly, which called forth a shout of laughter.

"Be quiet now," said the dark-haired one "Don't you see how the little Madonna is trembling with fright?"

"You take her, Max," said Barba, "and let us have more of the song."

Max took the child kindly by the hand, and said: "Come, little girl, nobody will harm you."

Franzeli took his hand trustfully, and they sang again:

“ Cold winter sternly reigneth;
The earth with ice is bound;
Yet God is ever working
Where'er His own are found.”

“ I have been spared from the frost to-day,” interposed Barba, whose face was glowing with heat.

Another peal of laughter, followed by shouts of “ Go on! go on!”

The children sang:

“ Yet many a little birdling
For food may hunt in vain;
And children, too, may hunger
Before the winter's wane.”

“ They shall not hunger here,” called several voices, and some plates of goodies were placed before the children.

But Basti finished his song:

“ Now to all, late or early,
Much good this year may bring.
God's friends ne'er lack a blessing,
He helps in everything.”

A great uproar followed, and everyone called: “ That is a good wish! That will bring us good luck on our journey!”

Barba, however, drew Basti to the table, and put a plate before him heaped with good things, saying:

"Now, my boy, go to work, and don't give up till you have finished it all."

The little boy looked at the plate with longing eyes, but he did not touch anything. Another plate had been given to Franzeli, and she was urged to eat; but, in spite of her great hunger, after the long walk, she laid the bit of bread she had taken up back on the plate, when she saw her brother was not eating.

"What is the matter? Why don't you take hold, my little fellow? What is your name?" asked Barba. "Basti," was the answer.

"Good. Well, Basti, what deep thoughts have taken away your appetite?"

"If I only had a bag!" was all the answer.

"A bag? And what for?"

"Then I would put everything in it, and take it to Mamma. She has had nothing to eat today."

Some of the party immediately cried out for somebody to bring a bag; others asked him where his mother lived. When Basti said she lived up in Burgeln, on the mountain, they were filled with astonishment, and Barba said: "If you have come from there, you must be very hungry. Now confess it, Basti."

"Yes," admitted the boy. "We have not had much bread to-day, but to-morrow Mamma can finish the stockings, and perhaps we shall have more."

The child's tale aroused great sympathy. Everybody wanted to do something—one to get a bag, one to get a man to carry it—but Barba silenced them all, by saying:

"First I want to see these children eat all they can, and then we will talk about something else. Now listen, Basti; you must eat all that is on this plate, and the rest your mother shall have."

"All that?" asked Basti.

"All. Now go to work."

Basti grasped his fork, and began to eat with such avidity that the company looked on in amazement.

"Did your mother send you here to sing?" asked Barba.

"No, she went to sleep, because she had eaten nothing, and was tired; and she wants to go and see the doctor," explained Basti. "And so I came here to get something for her when she wakes up. We got some bread the first time we sang here."

Now the students understood how it was that the New Year's Carol had been sung to them, and Barba said: "I propose we should all

accompany our singers to Burgeln. It will make a pleasant moonlight excursion."

"And you can have a chance to display your medical skill," suggested Max.

But when he saw all his friends getting ready to set out, he cried: "What are you thinking of? Can that little creature keep step with us, especially after having been over the road once to-day? Let mine host harness his horse, and we will put the little girl, with the basket, in the wagon, and then go on."

"That's a good idea," observed Barba, with a glance at the huge basket, which the landlady had brought for them instead of a bag.

"The best thing of all," continued Barba, turning to Max, "is for you to remain, and come with the little Madonna and the basket in the wagon. We will start off at once, and Basti shall be guide."

This was agreed upon.

At last they were under way. Barba marched at the head, and Basti beside him.

Max put Franzeli in the open carriage, and seated himself beside her, and they drove on in the beautiful glow, which still lingered in the sky from the setting sun.

Franzeli grew so confidential that she told her companion all about her mother, and Basti, and the goat, and what they all did.

In the meantime their mother, at home, awoke from her sleep, but she did not have sufficient strength to get up from the chair. Finally she roused herself a little. It was twilight, and she could not see her children.

She was so tired she could not stir.

"Basti," she called, after some time. "Franzeli, where are you?"

She received no answer. Her anxiety suddenly gave her strength. She rose quickly, and ran out of the little cottage; but nobody was there. She ran around the house, calling the children's names. All was still. Only the sound of the rushing stream reached her ears. A fearful thought came into her mind. She ran to the footpath, and would have rushed wildly down the mountain, but she saw a party of people coming up. They were talking loudly, and she thought she saw them pointing up to her little cottage with their alpenstocks.

"Oh, God!" she cried, in the greatest terror; "can it be a message for me?"

She stood as if paralysed.

"Mother! mother!" she heard all at once; "we are coming, and you must see what we are bringing. And the gentlemen are coming with us, and Franzeli in a carriage with a horse."

And Basti, rushing on ahead of them all,

tried to tell the whole story before he reached the top.

Afra's astonishment increased every moment, as she saw the party of young men, who greeted her in the friendliest manner, like old acquaintances. Two of them were carrying an immense basket, on two sticks, put over their shoulders, and last of all came Franzeli with her companion.

Afra did not know what to think. She gathered from Basti's account the fact that the young men had shown the children great kindness, and indeed the well-filled basket proved that. She turned to Barba. As he was the largest, she considered him the leader, and she thanked him so heartily that he was much affected.

Overwhelmed with thanks, the students at last took up their line of march down the mountain, and Basti ran to the highest point of the cliff and called as long as he could see them, "Good luck to you, Barba! Good luck to you, Max!" for he had soon learned their names.

When quiet reigned in the little household once more the children tried to tell their mother everything that had happened since their departure, and Franzeli could hardly find words to express the splendour of it all, especially the driving home in a carriage. But when the great basket was unpacked, and all sorts of good

things were taken out, and three whole loaves of white bread remained at the bottom, Basti jumped all over the room in his joy, crying: "Good luck to you, Max! Good luck to you, Barba!"

In the meantime the students were going back to Altorf in a state of high glee. Max had been silent for some time, when he suddenly burst forth with these words: "It is not right yet. No, it is not right. We have only provided means against starvation for a few days and nothing more. What will they do up there in the winter without warm clothes, without food or anything? We have not done enough. We must take up a collection now, to-day, and the landlord can deliver it for us."

"Sir Max," said Barba, "that is a beautiful idea; but it is not practicable. You forget that we are on a journey, that we are far from home and need something to get us back again. What is there to collect? I will make another proposition. We will found a new league, *the Bastiana*—yearly fee, four shillings. We will make our mothers and sisters honorary members, to furnish the necessary frocks and garments for Basti and the little Madonna. Let us collect the fees for the first year as soon as we get home, and invite the honorary members to make their contribution at once."

This plan met with high approval. They re-entered Altorf, seated themselves again at the table in the garden, and there, in the clear moonlight, *the Bastiana* was formerly established.

Great was the astonishment of Afra some weeks later, when the post-carrier appeared at her house with such an enormous package that he could hardly get it through the door. He threw it on the floor, and said as he wiped his brow: "I cannot imagine what acquaintances you can have in the north, Afra. Neither has the postmaster been able to guess who has sent you such a package from so far away."

"There must be some mistake," replied Afra.

"You can read for yourself," returned the carrier as he went on his way.

Yes, the name and residence of Afra were written upon it plainly. With trembling hands she began to undo the bundle, while the children gazed expectantly at the mysterious object. All at once the wrappings gave way, and out fell an astonishing number of little garments, stockings, and shoes, and in the midst of all was a heavy roll of silver money.

"From whom does it come? Who can have sent it?" cried Afra again and again, clasping her hands in joy.

The mystery was solved when Franzeli

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brought her a bit of paper which had fallen on the floor. On it were these words:

“ God's friends ne'er lack a blessing,
He helps in everything.”

“ That was in the song,” cried Basti. “ The young men who were at the inn have sent it.”

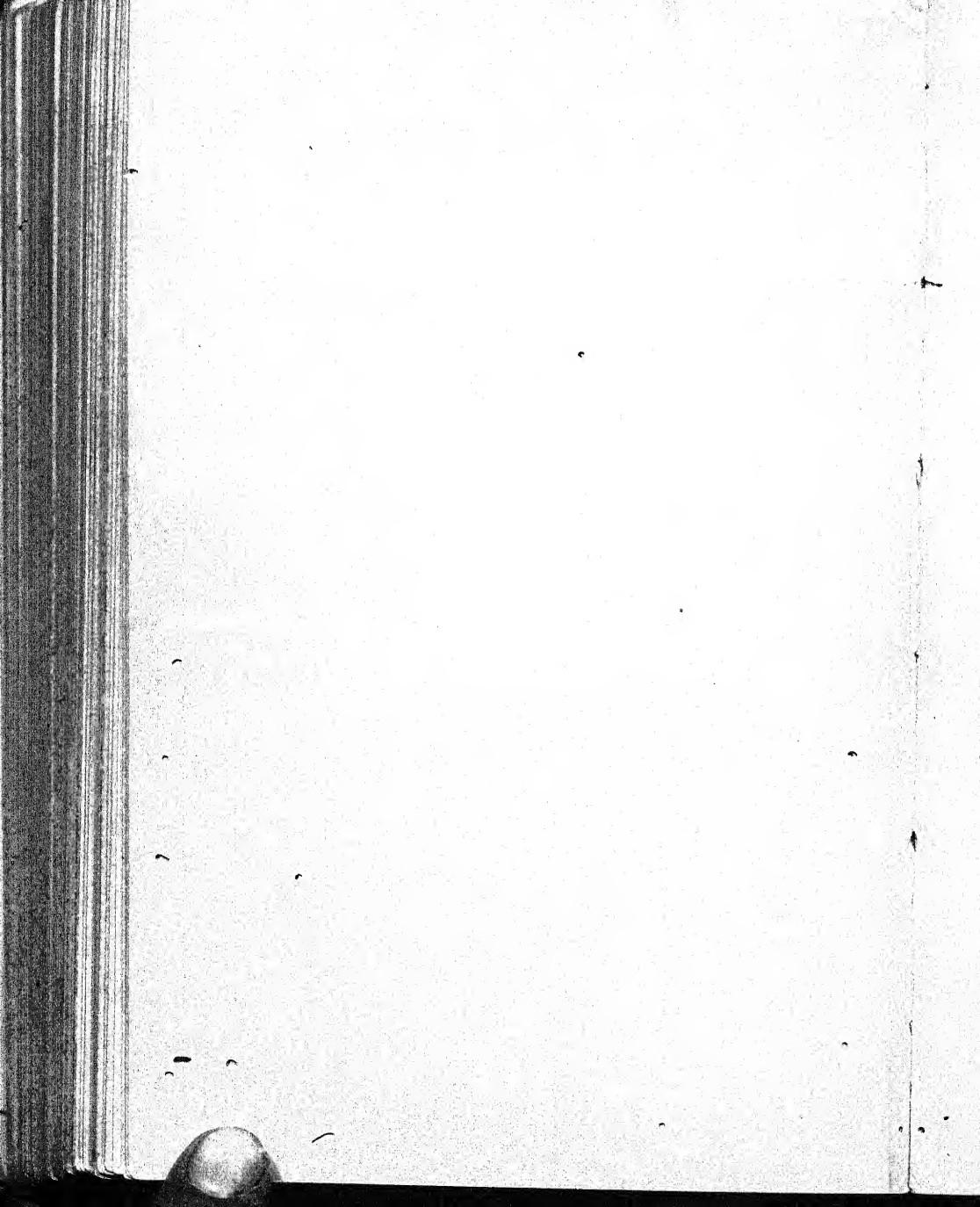
Yes, it could be no one else. An unspeakable joy filled the poor mother's heart as she thought that now she could pass the winter free from anxiety and still keep her children with her.

She was equally surprised next year when a similar package arrived, and the next, and the next, for *the Bastiana* became a permanent institution, and the contributions of clothing and money were sent regularly every year.

As a constant reminder, Afra fastened up on the wall of her room the bit of paper which the students put in the first package:

“ God's friends ne'er lack a blessing,
He helps in everything.”

THE VIOLET
AND
THE BUTTERFLY
FROM MADAME KABALINSKY



THE VIOLET

The boisterous autumn wind penetrated roaring and howling into the very heart of the forest. It shook the slender birches; the withered leaves of the aspen trembled with fear; and the supple willow, bending all her branches downward, shed cold bitter tears on the bosom of the terror-stricken lake. The fir stood upright gazing into the hazy sky, all his needles erect with alarm; whilst the trunks of the young birches turned paler than ever with anxiety. The wind blew roughly, tearing away the last dry leaves. Forcibly separated from their parent birches, they whirled through the air, heedless in their dismay and terror where the wind might drop them at last. Hurled and whirled in disorder through the atmosphere, they crumbled and fell powerless to the ground. The oak alone was unmoved, his sturdy roots driven deep into the ground, his thick and vig-

The Violet

orous trunk standing firmly on the soil; and, sending out in all directions his crooked boughs, he calmly withstood the violence of the wind. His yellow leaves stuck in knots to the branches, and, closely linked together, would not suffer the wind to sever them from their parent stem. "When the time comes, we shall fall of our own accord," said they; ".the wind shall not tear us off by force. We shall not allow it!"

The wood was full of disorder and tumult, the ground covered with dried-up branches and strewn with sere and yellow leaves.

At the foot of the mighty oak crouched a tiny dried-up violet. The little plant was entirely withered. Its dry leaves had curled themselves up and murmured pitifully to one another. The head of the faded flower hung downwards.

The wind having worked havoc in the tops of the trees, turned downwards and rushed with rough violence along the ground, as if it wished to sweep away the crumbling soil. Two more leaves were rent from the violet and whirled powerless to meet their severed comrades. The faded flower leant against the root of the oak. "I am dying," she murmured; "farewell the beautiful world."

But the wind ceased. It passed on, leaving the desolated wood in peace at last. In terror the violet still rested her frail head on the oak's

root. Everything was now quiet in the wood. The violet raised her eyes timidly; she recalled all her youth; the spring, the caressing sunbeams, the warm spring showers, the beauty of her green leaves, the short summer nights when she listened entranced to the song of the nightingale, and the pink light of the dewy morn. She remembered it all with bitter regret.

"Farewell, old oak!" she murmured pitifully. "I thank you for your shade and coolness. You have been kind to me, every one has been kind, and I thank every one. Farewell, beautiful world! I have loved you so dearly, and have been so happy! But all is finished for me now. I am dying."

The old oak, who despised to bend to the violence of the wind, now bowed his head downwards and looked in the direction of his feet. "You are suffering, little violet," said he. "Though the wind shake us, though the rain beat against us, and the snow crush down our branches, we shall not die."

"But my heart has already nearly ceased to beat, the sap no longer runs through my veins, I feel the approach of death," said the violet in a feeble voice. "Do not deceive me, old oak, I know that I am dying."

"Nothing really dies out," replied the oak triumphantly. "When I first sprang up in this

wood, before me lay the seeds of all those that grow round us. I have seen their childhood and their youth, I have seen much in my time, and have thought many deep thoughts; nothing dies altogether, believe me, young violet."

These words impressed the violet, and a ray of hope found its way to her agonized soul.

"Continue talking to me, old oak," she said in a failing voice; "your words comfort me."

The oak was silent and reflected awhile. "Listen," he continued. "Once I saw a young white birch tree die. In those days I was young myself. I loved the poor flexible tree, and could not bear to see her sufferings. My heart bled for her. She grew in freedom near me, well proportioned and white as snow. Her slender branches waved in the spring breezes. Wondrous were the perfumes her leaves gave forth in the calm luminous lights. The little birch tree was gay and happy. But a man came with an axe. He tore off her white bark and stripped her delicate frame. The sap ran in streams from her wounds. I saw how her leaves withered and curled, I saw her grow sad and she appeared to die slowly.

"The spring came, her leaves remained folded, her slender dry branches began to break off. At last the trunk itself lent over to one side, and each day bent nearer to the ground.

"One summer morning I heard a cracking sound. I looked, and had barely time to stretch out my wide-spreading arms when the poor little tree fell straight upon my trunk.

"I know not how long I remained gazing down at her in deep despair. It seems that many days and nights must have flown over my head. When I awoke my trunk was covered with grey moss.

"Life seemed very hard to bear then, but time did not stand still, and what was left of the little birch tree began to crumble away. My life grew wearisome to me, and for a long time I seemed to care for nobody.

"How did it happen? It was springtime again, as I now remember. Life regained its own. I felt new energies awake in my trunk. I looked around me, glancing at the spot where my vanished one had been. My heart beat violently. There, in the very same place, I saw a slender young birch tree just like my beloved in every feature. I stretched out my boughs and tossed my head, thinking it was a dream. But it was not a dream. My little birch tree had grown on sound roots, which were now throwing out a fresh shoot just as beautiful as the former growth.

"Nothing dies altogether; believe and hope," concluded the old oak, looking up to the sky;

The Violet

whilst the leaves at his summit fluttered, and his head nodded cheerily.

The violet pressed her head closely against the roots of the old oak tree. Her strength was leaving her, but her heart was filled with hope. "Is it possible," thought she, "that all is not ended for me?" She thought of her roots, "Has no wicked worm penetrated to them?" — the thought agitated her—"but no, the soil round the oak is healthy, my roots are sound and cool. Is it possible that all is not ended?" Her heart beat painfully.

"Let it be with me as with the young birch tree," whispered she. "I leave all to the Unseen Power which can work miracles. Oh, beloved nature, save me!" she exclaimed for the last time, and sank into a deep sleep.

The wind often roared after this. It broke the dry branches and bent the flexible plants. Winter came and covered the earth with a thick white mantle. The birch boughs bent and crackled beneath its weight. The old oak groaned, but stood firm, clinging fast to the earth with his mighty roots. A tiny hillock of frozen snow showed the spot where the violet had been; no other sign of her was left. The cruel frost chained everything. The red sun from time to time cast a stolen glance at his dear ones. He arose in the sky, slipped side-

ways between the branches, kissed the naked brows of the trees in passing, and again played stealthily with the frozen drops on the boughs. Then, with slow and noiseless steps, he glided away from the wood. Again he would appear. Shining out stealthily from behind the clouds he would glance at the wood and say, "Hope!" That one word revived their strength; they all became cheerful and waited in silence. "Oh come quickly, red sun!" rustled a young willow, and all the branches of the wood repeated her words, producing a light ringing sound. Then the young willow bent over the frozen lake, and tried with her stiffened boughs whether the transparent ice would not give way. The sun shone again, and again disappeared, the frozen droplets reflecting his smile. The snow glistened in diamond stars, the old oak seemed to grow young again in the rosy light, the whole scene glowed, but soon all was again pale and death-like.

But now the winter is past. The red sun strikes oftener and oftener upon field and meadow, and no longer stealthily and hurriedly, but long and gaily he plays with the streams of water which pour from every branch. The snow grows softer, and longs already to melt into water, but the frost will not yet give in, and when the sun sinks beneath the horizon he

The Violet

is there again. He stops the flowing streams, freezes the softening snow, and arrests the sap in the branches. Every day the sun remains absent for a shorter time, and at last he completely overcomes the frost.

The white snow is no longer in the wood; the branches of the trees are freed from it, and stretch themselves languidly; the new sap runs gaily through them, the earth awakes from its deep sleep and basks in the red sunshine. Here and there the green moss grows up, and whole families of young grasses thrust forth their thick reddish heads. The old oak is full of joy, he shakes off his yellow leaves, and begins to deck himself with a fresh green foliage. He casts a glance on the ground at his feet. The young violet is already dressed out in her little dark green leaves—they are so numerous that she can hardly show her tiny head. But she has succeeded, though her eyes are still closed and though her face is enveloped in a fine green veil. The old oak looks on and admires. Little by little the veil gives way. At last it falls back upon her shoulders, her folded leaves spread themselves out, her happy eyes open and she looks about her, she turns round to her neighbours, and then upwards to the sky. Folding cross-wise two of her green leaves, she sends up a faint cloud of wondrous fragrance.

"Good morning, kind old oak," she cries, with a joyous nod.

"Your heart was pure and untainted and you have revived," said the old oak. And he who scorned to bow to the storm bent low to the modest violet.

THE BUTTERFLY

How pleasant it was on the large burdock leaf on the evening when this story begins! The butterfly was keeping her birthday. That very morning she had awokened from her long sleep, and burst the shell of her chrysalis, and become a pretty blue butterfly. Her wings were of velvet; from her head sprang two golden feelers of the daintiest shape; her waist was enclosed in a dark velvet bodice. Newly emerged from her narrow cell, she saw and felt the beauty of God's world.

In this mood she moved slowly along the thick burdock leaf. Presently she became thirsty, and, passing along to a hollow which ran the whole length of the large veins, she came to a place where there was some water. Bending down her head to drink, she saw, for the first time, her own reflection in the water.

"Goodness, how pretty I am!" thought the

butterfly, keeping her eyes on the water. Then, turning round, she unfolded her wings and examined herself on every side. Her heart beat with joy. But she was alone on the leaf and could speak of it to no one.

It was then that the idea came into her head to give a ball, and invite her neighbours to keep her birthday. With this purpose she carefully examined the leaf, in the hope of discovering some other inhabitants on it.

And in truth, from the under side of the thick leaf a most extraordinary noise was heard, and looking in that direction she saw a big grey spider hard at work strengthening a large, round star-like web, to which the fluffy under side of the burdock served as a roof. He was so much occupied that he did not observe the coming of his visitor.

"I beg your pardon," said the butterfly, stopping short. "I don't know your name," she added, with embarrassment.

"Spider," was the hurried answer, without any interruption to the work.

"Now the fact is," continued the butterfly, "I wanted to ask you to come to me this evening. This is my birthday, and I wish to get up a small party. If you will honour me I shall be very happy. I live on the other side of this leaf."

"I'll be there," answered the spider, as

hurriedly as before. "That is to say, if I finish my work before the evening," he added, as he climbed up his web.

The butterfly returned to the other side of the leaf. Then she stopped and began to reflect.

"Well," thought she, "if all my guests are as unsociable as this one, I shan't have much pleasure from their company."

She was standing on the very edge of the leaf, whence hung a large dewdrop ready to fall to the ground. It was perfectly transparent, and reflected the butterfly's image. She could not help admiring herself, and thought that, after all, her party would be a very gay one. Extending her delicate wings, she flew from the leaf to a clump of grass, and alighted in the midst of a crowd collected round a grasshopper, who was giving a concert. A number of ants, beetles, lady-birds, flies, and gnats were moving about him.

At the sudden appearance of the graceful butterfly the attention of every one was turned to her, and a murmur of admiration arose from all sides.

"How charming, how beautiful!" they cried, with one voice. The grasshopper threw down his fiddle, quite overcome with delight.

The butterfly was delighted, though the attention of the numerous assembly confused her.

Bending her neck modestly, and folding back her wings, she made her way to a large blue fly, and with a graceful curtsy and timid voice murmured:

"Excuse me, madam, if I disturb you. I am afraid I have interrupted——"

"Not at all, my pretty one, no interruption whatever; your coming has most agreeably surprised us. But where do you come from? Nobody knows you here."

"I am still very young," answered the butterfly timidly. "I am unacquainted with the neighbourhood, and did not, therefore, expect to come upon so large an assembly."

"I am the mistress here, and my name is Blue-bottle," answered the other. "Delighted to make your acquaintance. Make yourself at home, I beg you, quite without ceremony."

"Since such is the case, may I ask you to attend my birthday party?" said the butterfly in a low voice. "I am giving a small party on the burdock leaf yonder."

"For my part, I shall be most happy," said the fly, with a bow. "Why shouldn't I visit you? I don't stand on my dignity, I call on every one."

"Will you come too? and you, and you?" said the butterfly, addressing each of the company in turn, with a graceful bow.

The Butterfly

All expressed their willingness to be present, and the grasshopper in particular felt so pleased that he couldn't keep his seat, but showed his delight by a series of hops.

On her return home the butterfly felt very hungry, and seeing a sweet-brier bush close to the burdock, she flew to it, and began sucking the delicate juice from the yellow heart of the flower. The bush was already occupied by a handsome bee, who was collecting the sweet and perfumed honey.

"Here's another guest," thought the butterfly as she flew over to her and offered her an invitation.

"Very well, my darling," answered the bee, with a busy air; "if I can manage to get through my work, I'll certainly come. You see we are a busy set, and have no time to enjoy ourselves. But one must make exceptions sometimes, and you're such a darling that I should like to make your acquaintance."

The bee flew away heavily laden with honey, and the butterfly ate what she had left.

But it was time to get ready for the ball. The air was growing cool. Everything was ready at the appointed time; the burdock leaf neatly arranged, and a carpet of rosy leaves culled from the neighbouring bush spread upon the floor.

"The blue-bottle will certainly not dance,

she is so stout, and, I suppose, no longer young. The spider won't dance either; so I'll prepare a place for them here, where they can talk together."

The butterfly awaited her guests with impatience. She felt a strong desire to dance and chat. Seeing everything was in order, she began to arrange herself, with the dewdrop for a mirror, and to try the skill of her legs and wings.

At last the guests began to assemble. The blue-bottle was the first to arrive, and the young mistress of the house was able to examine her at her ease. The fly was very glossy, her wings glistened with bright-blue tints in the light of the setting sun. The grasshopper tuned his fiddle and began to play a waltz. The gnats were the first to flutter through the air. They were followed by the blue fly, who struck the floor heavily in her flight. Then came the mistress of the house, who, extending her delicate wings, rose in the air and began to turn with a rapidity that surprised herself.

The party was a gay one. All the guests circled and wheeled to the music of the grasshopper, who played without ceasing, and all agreed that it was a delightful party.

Meanwhile the sun had set, and the weary guests seated themselves upon the leaf to rest.

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Suddenly the forgotten and dusty spider made his appearance. He advanced to the butterfly, and, extending his legs gracefully, begged to be excused for his late arrival. He had only just finished his work. "Never mind," said the butterfly; "I am only sorry you were not here to enjoy yourself with us. And now, shall we all go to supper?"

The company rose from their places, the butterfly leading the way, and, climbing up the red stem of the sweet-brier, all the guests collected on it. The supper was laid on a thick branch on which five fine flowers had freshly opened. Each of them was lighted up by a bright glow-worm. The light was very brilliant. From the small hanging dewdrops innumerable rays were reflected, so that the whole branch shone from afar as if covered with diamonds. The butterfly pressed her guests to taste the sweet honey, the fresh dew, and the perfumed juice of the flowers. When they were all seated, she began searching for the blue-bottle, and to her great surprise she saw her in the distance flying away with a vicious buzz. But the ball went on, and the supper was magnificent, though all did not enjoy the entertainment equally. The ants sat on one side and sulked, the spider occasionally squinted in the direction where the blue-bottle had vanished. The lady

of the house did not observe these details, and, feeling hungry, sipped the sweet and refreshing food with great satisfaction. She thought it very jolly.

On taking leave, all the guests expressed their thanks to her, and the gnats, in particular, were so pleased and delighted that they knew not how to praise her beautiful party sufficiently. But, as everything must come to an end, this happy evening finished at last, and the guests went off to sleep. A few of the glow-worms alone continued to light the place where the supper had been laid, and the dew glistened as at first, illuminating each little leaf.

After the ball, the grasshopper, quite exhausted, sank down upon the grass and fell into a profound sleep. But still in his dreams he saw the beautiful butterfly and her delightful ball and, half waking, seized his fiddle and ran the bow once or twice over the strings. Then all was silence again.

The butterfly slept soundly all night, and only awoke when the spider, at work on his web, began to beat violently against the floor. Perhaps something is wrong with him, thought she, flying hastily to the edge of the leaf.

"What has happened, neighbour?" asked she, bending her feelers towards him.

"Nothing," returned he.

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"I fancied there was something unusual," lisped the butterfly, "I heard such a noise."

"Nothing but work," returned the spider, not quite pleased. "There will be rain this evening, and I must arrange my web."

"Well, then," asked the butterfly timidly, "what did you think of my yesterday's ball?"

"Very good, there's nothing to be said, everything was arranged with taste, and as for the company, well the company was good. There was only that fly, the blue one. If I could only catch her in my web—if she were to fall into it. Now, let me advise you, neighbour, to avoid her acquaintance. You're very young, and she's very wicked."

The butterfly looked at him pettishly, and thought to herself: "How cross he is to-day! He must be in a bad humour. It's best to be off as quickly as possible," and she climbed gently up to her leaf.

She rose high in the air to try her wings, and finding them sufficiently strong she flew with joy to a flowery meadow, and thought with compassion of her cross neighbour and his unfinished web.

She flew about all day, and began to think of not returning home for the night, but of spending it in the cup of a many-leaved, double poppy. Whilst so reflecting, there blew a sudden

gust of wind. The whole meadow was agitated, and the flowers bent their heads to the ground. The poor butterfly was so shaken that she fell suddenly from her couch, a cloud of golden dust marking the track of her fall. How terrified she was! She could hardly manage to rise again.

But there was no time to be lost. She must fly home at once to the stout burdock leaf. It would protect her from the bad weather. With an effort she rose and flew away, and at last reached her home, and sank down on the edge of the leaf quite tired.

But her misfortunes were not yet ended. Rain began to fall in heavy drops. It struck upon her velvety back, and, her wings, saturated with damp, stuck together. She thought she was going to die, when suddenly her neighbour the spider appeared on the border of the leaf.

"Come quick to me," exclaimed he, out of breath; "the rain will beat you to death."

With what joy did she follow him. And how great was her surprise to find on entering his thick web that not one drop of rain penetrated into his house! The room was dark but quite dry, and held firmly to the fluffy under side of the leaf.

How nice it seemed to the poor butterfly to be there, and how she thanked her deliverer! The spider was indeed very kind, though his

ungainly manners, his rough clothes, and dusty appearance had at first frightened her.

"Listen to me, child," said the spider. "I am old enough to talk to you as to a daughter. I am aware of your inexperience, but you are a dear, good, little neighbour, and I want to give you a piece of useful advice. I see that the praise of your new acquaintances has completely turned your head. Nor is that wonderful, for you are really very charming. But understand this, don't listen to the advice of the blue-bottle."

"But why?" asked the astonished butterfly. "She is always so good to me, and no later than yesterday she asked me to go with her to see the world."

"Just so," cried the spider; "that's exactly what I expected. Hasn't she to go to some house or other where men live?"

The butterfly was quite taken aback. Who could have told the spider of it? It was just as he had said. In the morning the fly had met her, and had pressed her to fly with her to a place where she would see things she had never even dreamt of before.

"I am surprised at that fly," continued the spider, firing up. "She not only won't stay at home herself, but she must mislead others. What! live without society! impossible!" said the spider, mimicking the fly.

"But what am I to do?" asked the butterfly, quite upset. "I have said I would go."

"Well, you know best," answered the spider. "My duty is to warn you. You are not too young to judge and consider for yourself. I won't detain you."

And he climbed up the side of his web. The rain had ceased, the sun shone brightly, and they both went out into the open world.

How beautiful it was! The star-like web was besprinkled with rain. Its threads were decked with tiny dewdrops which shone like precious stones. The sun played upon each of them in turn until the web sparkled like a star of diamonds.

"How lovely it is!" cried the butterfly.

"Yes, you foolish one. For you everything that glitters is gold! If you had to dry it now. Ah! what a life is ours!" and he shuffled back into his house.

The butterfly sat thinking of what the spider had said.

She longed to see the world. But, "No," she said, "I won't go. The spider is right. I'll slip out a different way and avoid the fly, and I'll come back again at night. No, I positively won't go."

So saying she fixed herself firmly to the leaf, and fell peacefully asleep.

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The morning came, the weather was beautiful. After the rain the flowers looked gayer and brighter than ever, and their sweet juice stood in large drops upon their petals. On all sides a humming was heard. Swarms of bees were collecting honey, and the gnats were whirling round in the air. The butterfly awoke late, and gazing on the brilliant sun, smiled at the past day. In every pool of water collected on the leaves she saw the reflection of her own image, and felt full of joy.

"What nonsense!" thought she. "Last night I was so much shaken that everything seemed terrible. Whatever may be said, God's world is very beautiful."

She did not give up her intention of avoiding the fly, and was already preparing to take flight. Hardly, however, had she alighted on a honeysuckle flower to get her breakfast, when the blue-bottle flew up to her.

The butterfly's heart beat violently, and she pretended not to see her. But the fly began buzzing into her ear.

"Listen to me, darling," she said. "I've been longing for you. Let us start as we arranged. They expect us there already."

The butterfly did not answer, and tried to get away by the opposite side. But the fly would not leave her, and continued whisper-

ing in her ear. "It will be gayer there than you can even imagine," he said. "You will laugh at your own ball with your sweet-briars and glow-worms. One candle will give more light than all your glow-worms."

By this time the butterfly no longer resisted, but listened.

"And as I am already invited," the fly buzzed on, "and as I promised to bring you with me, mind you are ready. I'll call for you myself." And with these words the blue-bottle flew away.

The curiosity of the butterfly was excited. "What! is it possible that there should be a ball finer than mine on the burdock? I don't think that can be the case; nothing like it was ever seen. Can she be speaking falsely? I am fearfully anxious to know."

And the poor butterfly could hardly think what to do.

Meanwhile, in a rich country house, preparations for a large ball were being made. Everything there was in motion. The rooms were being arranged, the pretty mistress and her daughters were filling large crystal bowls with fruits, the chamber-maids were driving out the flies, the children were bringing in flowers from the garden and fields and disposing them in large nosegays on the tables. One bouquet of

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field flowers ornamented the centre of the drawing-room table. When all was ready a number of candles were lighted and the guests made their appearance.

In the dancing-hall and the drawing-room all the windows looking on the garden were still shut. But soon a little girl ran to the balcony door and threw it wide open. At the moment a slight buzzing was heard, and in flew the blue-bottle with the beautiful blue butterfly behind her. The glitter and noise overcame the butterfly so completely that she stopped at once and alighted on the top of the door. But the fly hurried her on. "Now, then, don't be shy, you silly thing," she buzzed.

"It seems so dreadful to me," whispered the butterfly.

"What nonsense!" mocked the fly. "Don't be afraid. See, there's your beloved sweet-brier, and your honeysuckle."

When the butterfly saw the beautiful nose-gay she became livelier and alighted on it timidly. "A butterfly, a butterfly! such a pretty one, come and see!" screamed a little girl who was standing near the table.

Two young girls advanced to the bouquet and began to admire her. Their praises quite turned the butterfly's head. She climbed up the flowers, and, in order to be better seen,

began fluttering round them, whilst the fly still buzzed. "Nearer to the light, nearer, you silly thing. The company is admiring you," buzzed the fly. Timidly the butterfly approached the candles and commenced flying in wide circles round them, but soon her head became giddy; the circle grew narrower, until at last, flying straight into the candle, she felt a burning pain and fell senseless in the centre of the nosegay. The girls gave a little scream and then ran away from her. The fly, seated on a dish of preserves, was eating comfortably, greedily sucking up the luscious syrup. She saw the butterfly fall, but was in no way disturbed; there was a large dish of preserves, and she was enjoying herself. When the poor butterfly came to herself, she was still lying on the nosegay, and her friend the spider was standing over her, shaking his burly form sorrowfully. He had already made a small web over her head.

"How did you get here, my friend?" gasped the butterfly.

"I was dragged here against my will," said the spider. "When they cut the twigs of honeysuckle I was on them, as ill luck would have it, and was brought here with them. But it's very lucky for you, my poor little one, all the same."

But the butterfly did not hear her friend's last words. It was night, and the lights had

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gone out. She was lying with her wings scorched, suffering dreadful agony, and was unable to move. The spider had left her, too, without another word. She thought she was dying alone, abandoned by everyone. But soon she heard the heavy step of her friend, accompanied by a plaintive buzzing from the blue-bottle. Turning her eyes in that direction, she saw in the moonlight that the spider had caught his blue enemy, and had rolled her up in a web from head to foot. He set to work comfortably to make a meal of her, and having supped, he seated himself close to the suffering butterfly.

I have heard that, though the butterfly was badly hurt and had lost her beauty, she found she could fly a little. She refrained ever after from making acquaintanceship with blue-bottles; and the spider, they say, never forsook her.

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